

Sumner grows up fast

Puget Sound Business Journal (Seattle) - December 11, 1998 by Joe Nabbefeld Staff Writer

[Print this Article](#) [Email this Article](#) [Reprints](#) [RSS Feeds](#) [★ Most Viewed](#) [★ Most Emailed](#)

Take one last nostalgic look at the lush, bucolic farmlands around Sumner.

The long-anticipated industrialization of the Pierce County town -- at the lower end of the dense warehouse corridor known as the Kent Valley -- has surged into full gear, driven by cheaper land costs and thus cheaper rents.

A new development company, created by former water pipe company owner William Davis and his son, has started preconstruction work on the second warehouse project in an industrial zone on the town's north end.

Davis Property & Investment plans to build a total of 600,000 square feet in a half-dozen buildings on 40 acres at the corner of East Valley Highway and Elm Street.

That project, called Valley Distribution Center, comes in on the small side of typical Kent Valley projects that tend toward 800,000 to 1 million square feet.

It's almost miniature compared to Sumner's first project, the 4 million-square-foot Valley South Corporate Park already under construction by Tarragon L.L.C., on 139 acres along the west side of 142nd Avenue East.

Place two more huge projects on the list.

Tarragon principals Mike Corliss and Joe Blattner say they've tied up a 150-acre site a little further north at Eighth Street East. They plan a project at least as big as Valley South Corporate Park. Bellingham-based Trillium Corp. owns the site.

Just south of that, Emerald Turf owner Bob Johnson is actively marketing his 150-acre turf farming site to warehouse developers, a site big enough for another mammoth project.

Industrial real estate broker Chris Corr of Kidder Mathews & Segner described the Emerald Turf site as "the 50-yard line" because its location will be the choicest when construction finishes on a new interchange with Highway 167 at 24th Street East.

"Transportation for tenants is the big key," said Tarragon principal Mike Corliss. "You need to be Interstate 5- and Interstate 90-connectable."

These remain risky developments, nevertheless, because they pioneer new territory.

Corliss, a veteran apartment and warehouse developer who has worked on Sumner's conversion for years, said he has kept his risks to a minimum.