

# H O U S I N G The Portland Observer

## Westinghouse \$6 billion 5-year contract

Westinghouse Electric Corporation announced last week that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded a Westinghouse-led team of companies a \$6 billion, five-year contract for managing the DOE's Savannah River Site. The contract includes an option for an additional five years.

"We are honored and delighted that the Department of Energy and Secretary O'Leary have expressed their confidence in Westinghouse and our team of subcontractors, each of whom literally define excellence in their fields. Together, we are fully committed to moving the Savannah River Site to a new level of performance excellence and to advancing the Secretary's contract reform initiatives, which already are achieving significant savings for U.S. taxpayers," said Michael H. Jordan, chairman and chief executive officer of Westinghouse Electric Corporation.

Under the new contract, the Westinghouse Savannah River Com-

pany will manage the site and its nuclear facility operations as well as safety, health, quality assurance and technology development activities.

"During the next five years, we will be working with a single focus — to attain performance leadership in every key area, building on the accomplishments of the past seven years to achieve our customer's program milestones and priorities safely and cost effectively," said Francis J. Harvey, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Westinghouse Industries and Technology Group.

"Westinghouse has a partnership in performance with the Department of Energy that has resulted in sustained improvement at every one of the sites we manage. Our focus on applying successful performance and cost improvement strategies across all of the sites we manage for the DOE has yielded savings of more than \$1 billion to the taxpayer, over \$300 million of it in 1995."

Westinghouse has managed the Savannah River Site since 1989, moving the site from its original mission of weapons production to its post-Cold War mission of environmental remediation and processing nuclear materials for safe storage and ultimate disposal.

With its prime subcontractor, Bechtel Savannah River, Inc., Westinghouse has completed significant waste management and environmental restoration projects.

As its mission shifted, Westinghouse initiated rigorous new safety and operations management programs while concurrently achieving significant cost reductions and working with private industry to transfer promising new technologies for commercialization.

Earlier this year at Savannah River, Westinghouse began operation of the nation's largest and most advanced nuclear waste processing facility, which is the first of its kind in the U.S. The facility immobilizes the

waste in glass for environmentally safe, long-term storage.

During its seven years of managing the Savannah River Site, Westinghouse and its prime subcontractor, Bechtel, have made major strides in site environmental clean-up, upgraded a number of older facilities and brought on-line several new ones to help the DOE move into its new post-Cold War responsibilities.

In addition, the site has become the acknowledged leader in safety and operational discipline within the DOE.

The Savannah River Site occupies 300-square-miles near Aiken, South Carolina.

For nearly four decades it produced materials for the nation's nuclear defense programs, primarily plutonium and tritium.

It was built in the 1950s by DuPont, which operated the site until 1989, when the Westinghouse-Bechtel team won an intense competition to manage its operations.

## California a hot market

In a flurry of suburban office building sales along the Interstate-680 corridor, institutional investors have registered a new vote of confidence for East Bay real estate.

Real estate investment trusts, pension funds and wealthy investor groups are involved in at least a half dozen current deals, most of which are slated to close in the next 30 to 60 days.

"We are very interested in the market. We've taken a run at just about anything," said Peter Schnugg, senior vice president of Spieker Properties, a Menlo Park-based real estate investment trust. "(Greater Walnut Creek) is probably the premiere suburban market in the East Bay. It makes sense for us to be there as soon as we can."

The bonanza of summer sales comes after at least five years of trying to fill an over-built market, climbing vacancy rates, foreclosures and fire sales. The deals join the ranks of about \$152 million in deals on eight buildings larger than 100,000 square feet in central Contra Costa County since last August.

Another Walnut Creek broker reports that Mitsui Fudosan (U.S.A. Inc.) will sell 2700 Ygnacio Blvd. in Walnut Creek to San Mateo-based William Wilson & Associates next week for \$8.75 million.

"Wall Street likes real estate now," added Sean M. Cooley, vice president of office buildings for CB Commercial Real Estate Group Inc. in Walnut Creek.

Because of a recovering economy, businesses are scouring for available expansion space in the greater East Bay office market of

roughly 23 million square feet.

The activity has pushed the overall office vacancy rates in the East Bay down to an average of about 10 percent, a five-year low, according to Allen Meacham Associates, a real estate consulting company in Point Richmond. The vacancy rates in some submarkets, including the stretch from San Ramon to Livermore, are estimated to be in the single-digit range.

"There are fewer and fewer see-through buildings. Real estate is starting to look better and better," Allen Meacham said.

Much of the absorption of office space this year has been driven by the relocation of a booming Silicon Valley economy that cannot fully accommodate high-tech, biotech and telecommunications companies.

"We see a lot of activity from Silicon Valley. Everybody is positive about business again. People are willing to make commitments," Cooley said.

"There's more competition for these spaces than I ever anticipated."

Even banks — hesitant to finance real estate deals following the savings & loan crisis and the spate of Resolution Trust Corp. fire sales — are finding the competition heating up for good loans.

"Business is coming back, vacancies are decreasing and the values are going up. Banks were under criticism for making real estate loans. They are more willing to make the deal work," explained Douglas Cook, assistant vice president for The Mechanics Bank in Walnut Creek. "There's no question it's picking up. Buyers are in the market."

## Re-engineering an estate

BY BOB ROST

Now may be a good time to re-engineer your landscape, particularly if trees and shrubs have become overgrown and are shading plants that need sunlight.

"In this case, re-engineering simply means taking a good look at what you have now and figuring out what you could do to make it better," said Ray McNeilan, home horticulturist with the Oregon State University Extension Service.

"As landscapes mature, plants change," McNeilan pointed out.

"Trees and shrubs outgrow their place in the garden. In almost every landscape, a time comes when some re-ovation, or re-engineering, is needed."

Develop a plan that you can use as a guide through the re-engineering period, McNeilan said. A planned landscape or garden doesn't have to happen all at once.

A plan lets you work on parts of the landscape and save other areas until the next season, yet gives overall guidance towards a predetermined goal.

What is the focal point in your garden or home landscape, or do you have one? A focal point draws the eye and stimulates interest in the garden. It could be as simple as a bird feeder, or as complicated as a plant maze. There can be several pints for different areas.

"The National Garden Bureau suggests that a coordinated color scheme can really pull a garden together or refresh one that may have gone stale," McNeilan said. "For example, try matching the colors in your garden to the colors in dishes or

placemats that you might use for outdoor dining."

Mid to late summer is not the best time to plant, but it is a good time to plan, McNeilan noted.

Plan now for changes you might make later this fall or next spring. Pruning, transplanting, thinning and replanting may all be involved in your plan.

"Re-engineering need not be a major undertaking," McNeilan added. "By planning small adjustments every year or so, you can keep your landscape or garden interesting."

## Protecting home landscape from spider mites

BY BOB ROST

Hot and dry summer weather is ideal for spider mites, tiny pests that attack many types of ornamental plants in the home landscape.

Mites feed on plant juices, causing the leaves or needles of plants to turn yellow and dry and to fall, said

Ray McNeilan, home horticulturist with the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Infested broad leaves may be cupped downward or become distorted. A very light film of webbing may or may not be found where spider mites are established.

Spider mites also attack some garden crops including sweet corn and beans, McNeilan added.

There are several species of mites, but the most common are red spider mites and two-spotted spider mites.

The mite is too small to be seen without some sort of magnifying lens.

One way to check for their presence is to hold a sheet of white paper under a cluster of possibly infested leaves, and strike the branch or stem. Close-ly examine the material that falls to the paper.

"Dust spots that move are probably spider mites," McNeilan said.

Washing infested plants periodically with a strong stream of water will provide some control.

Insecticidal soap and overhead irrigation are alternative controls for home landscapers who prefer not to use pesticides. Insecticidal soaps are available at garden and nursery stores.

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## Peninsula Drainage Plan

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to reinforce a section of railroad embankment and construct a splash apron below the pump-outlet pipes through the Columbia Slough levee near Portland International Raceway.

The site is part of the Peninsula Drainage District No. 1. Action is needed to strengthen the project to contain a 100-year flood.

The term "100-year flood" does not mean that a flood of this scope can occur only once every 100 years. The term means that there is a one percent chance each year that a flood of that magnitude could occur.

The proposed work calls for a 2,000 foot railroad embankment reinforcement. The reinforcement,

which is on the landward side of the embankment, will be raised to a level of 28.7 feet (Portland Datum) with sand.

This reinforcement, in conjunction with the railroad embankment, will protect against a one-percent chance (100-year) flood with a 98.5 percent reliability.

Construction of the splash apron calls for placing large rocks (riprap) below the pump-discharge outlet to prevent erosion when the pumping water out of the drainage district and into the slough.

A Water Quality Certification has been requested from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The certification is required since the riprap will be placed in the water.

## Homeowners Partners Project

The goal of the Oregon Homeownership Partners Project 2000 is to give increasing numbers of hard-working families the chance to adopt the mantle of "homeowner."

This partnership is one of 58 local coalitions around the country who have accepted President Clinton's challenge, issued just over a year ago, to add 8 million new homeowners in this nation by the end of the year 2000, bringing the national homeownership rate to an all-time high of 67.5 percent.

Why is homeownership so important?

There are the measurable benefits: that the home is a primary means of wealth accumulation for American homeowners; that homeownership generates construction, jobs, and economic growth.

But there are also homeownership's less tangible—but no less important—benefits: that homeownership instills self-reliance, responsibility, a sense of pride. Brick by brick, homeownership can build or rebuild neighborhoods, communities, and lives.

The good news is that the Presi-

dent's strategy, which funnels private - and public-sector efforts toward helping private lenders reach new pockets of credit-worthy homebuyers, is working. After years of stagnation, 1995 saw this nation's largest increase in homeownership in 30 years.

Homeownership in America now stands at 65.4 percent, a 15-year high.

The people of the Oregon are working together to bring this positive trend to their own neighborhoods. Proof of this shows in Oregon through the Portland Housing Center's Project Down Payment Program.

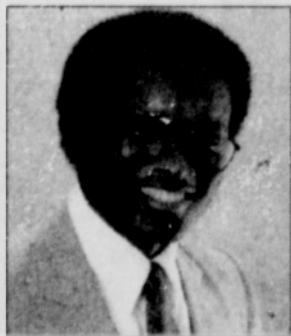
This program helps low - to moderate - income borrowers achieve the dream of homeownership by helping them hurdle the main barrier in purchasing a home—the funds needed funds needed for downpayment. As of now, there are 27 innovative programs such as this one scattered throughout the state.

It is encouraging to see homeownership's comeback, in Oregon and throughout the country. But success notwithstanding, there is much more to be done.

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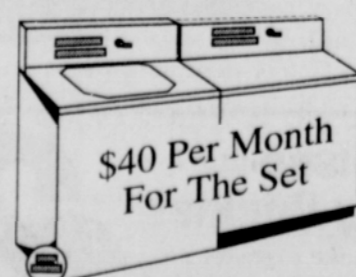


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