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Mesa del Sol gets ready to build houses

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Forest City Covington will break ground on the first phase of its residential development March 28 at 9:30 a.m. at its **Mesa del Sol** project in Albuquerque.

U.S. Rep. **Martin Heinrich**, D-NM; Albuquerque Mayor **Richard Berry**; and the four builders selected to work on the first phase of the project are expected to attend.

Forest City plans to build 250 homes and models in the first phase, including infrastructure, and has selected three local builders and national giant **Pulte Homes** to do the buildout. The local builders include **Rachel Matthew Homes**, which will do the upper-end units, priced between \$275,000 and \$340,000.

"We believe Mesa del Sol is the future of residential building in Albuquerque and the future of our company," said **Steve Nakamura**, the president of Rachel Matthew Homes.

RayLee Homes and **Paul Allen Homes** also were selected for the project.

Forest City originally was going to start on its residential buildout in July 2008, but shelved the project when the housing market soured.

"We are sending a strong signal about the state of economy. Mesa del Sol is moving ahead. The economy is stronger and we believe in the Albuquerque residential market," said **Michael Daly**, president of Mesa del Sol

A Mesa del Sol spokesman added that permits have been obtained and details on the types of homes and their costs would be announced at the groundbreaking. The event will take place at Mesa Del Sol's Aperture Center at 5700 University West Boulevard.

These will be the first homes built at Mesa del Sol, where there is the potential for more than 30,000 homes over a 50 year period.

Forest City's housing approach at Mesa Del Sol has been deliberate and it missed the housing boom in the mid-2000s. It focused on creating jobs first at Mesa del Sol before it developed its New Urbanism residential master plan. It has created jobs by attracting companies such as **Schott Solar**, Fidelity, MSR-FSR and Albuquerque Studios, but when Forest City was ready to start building out its residential sector, the market wasn't ready to support it.

In 2008, Forest City Covington pulled the plug on its Mesa del Sol housing program after it had cleared land for lots and started negotiating with home builders. Getting financing to build out the subdivision's infrastructure to connect the homes with water, sewer and power was problematic. With little demand for new homes, Forest City was forced to downsize its staff at the time.