

REAL ESTATE & CLASSIFIEDS

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A GUIDE TO THE GREATER FORT MYERS REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Luxury home tour underway Latest in home design trends on display

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

The newest and brightest ideas in home design and construction from Southwest Florida's best custom home builders will be on display through Feb. 17 courtesy of the Luxury Home Tour.

During the weekends of Feb. 8-10 and 15-17, passport ticket-holders can tour the area's most prestigious communities - including Lely Resort, Mediterra, Renaissance, Tarpon Point, Tiburon, Twin Eagles and more - to explore the area's most exciting custom-built homes, each carrying a price tag of more than \$1.5 million.

The tour, now in its fourth year, is a popular event for people who are looking for just the right luxury homebuilder to create their dream home, want to preview the latest design trends, or simply are seeking ideas to invigorate their present living space.

The tour has grown to 25 unique models this year and promises to be more informative and fun than ever before. Two communities, Renaissance and Lely Resort will host hospitality areas during the Luxury Home Tour with refreshments in a relaxing setting where ticket-holders can learn more about the communities and the custom builders participating in the tour. Worthington Group, developers of Renaissance, will be serving refreshments including Starbucks coffee, soft drinks and snacks at the Worthington Sales Center all three weekends while at Lely Resort, Stock Development will welcome visitors at the Players Club with fresh baked cookies, snacks and bottled water.

What's new

One notable trend is the added emphasis on luxurious outdoor living with ever larger areas given over to covered outdoor kitchens and wet bars complete with "chimneyed" gas grilles, stainless steel storage cabinets, fireplaces and everything needed to host large alfresco parties. Some homes with corner-pocketing sliding glass walls open completely, eliminating the boundary between indoors and outdoors. Another is the addition of sepa-



COURTESY PHOTO

The Renoir model by Distinctive Communities.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Bellini Model by The Vintage Group.

rate guest quarters, casitas and poolside cabanas away from the main living areas for out-of-town visitors and purpose-built studios and studies as opposed to converting bedrooms to such uses.

Green Building and energy conserva-

tion are on everyone's mind these days and the new models show many improvements in both materials and building techniques. Renewable, safer and stronger materials such as metal studs in interior walls, paperless mold-resistant sheetrock and formaldehyde-free adhesives contribute to a healthier home environment, while built-in pest control systems for both the interior and surrounding grounds keep creepy-crawlies away.

Technology favorites this year include Lutron Pathway lighting systems that can light your passage all the way from the garage to the master suite (or anywhere else you are bound) with the press of a single switch and pool management systems that incorporate controls for the pool heater, cleaner, lights, a filter timer and alerts that warn pool owners of any potential problems.

About the Tour

The self-guided tour is open to the public from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, Feb. 8-10 and 15-17, 2008. Passport tickets may be purchased at participating model homes for \$25, or \$5 for single-site access. For more information, visit www.luxuryhometour.net. ■

Palmira Golf Country Club to hold House Hunters Safari

Palmira Golf Country Club is hosting a House Hunters Safari open house event on Sunday, Feb. 10 from noon to 4 p.m. This is the third time that Ronto Group is partnering with the community's builders and local realtors to showcase homes presently available throughout Palmira.

Homebuyers are welcome to tour the community and visit a number of new and nearly new homes during this open house event. The safari themed tour starts at the Welcome Center where guests will receive a detailed map of the community showing where homes currently available for purchase are located.

Representatives from the community's developer and golf and fitness clubs will be on-hand at the Welcome Center to answer questions about the community and membership opportunities. Golf and fitness memberships at the country club and Renaissance Center Club are currently available through creative financing opportunities.

Palmira Golf Country Club features luxury coach homes, villa homes and custom estate homes by Southwest Florida's finest craftsmen, priced from the \$300s to more than \$2.5 million. The community also features memberships for Palmira's 27 holes of championship golf, tennis center, luxury clubhouse with formal and casual dining; and the Renaissance Center Club, offering a lagoon-style, zero-entry pool, fitness center and classrooms that host Florida Gulf Coast University lectures.

Palmira Golf Country Club is located on Bonita Beach Road two miles east of I-75 off Exit 116. The Welcome Center is open seven days a week. For more information, call (239) 495-1004, or toll-free 1-866-PALMIRA. On the Web at www.PalmiraGolfandCountryClub.com. ■

Home sales in Mediterra still strong 2007 sales top prior year

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Mediterra bucked national and local real estate trends in 2007, reporting more home sales than the previous year. The 1,697-acre North Naples community reported 45 sales in 2007 - up three units compared to 2006.

The sales, totaling nearly \$62.2 million, included coach homes, single-family detached villas and single-family homes. Six models sold for almost \$24.7 million.

The numbers reflect Mediterra's unique position in the real estate market, said Bonita Bay Group President and CEO Kitty Green.

"While there was a general real estate slowdown in Southwest Florida in 2007, Mediterra was able to beat 2006 sales," she said. "These numbers show that buyers will continue to come to Florida for the sunshine, and to Mediterra for its lifestyle."

That was exactly the objective of Michi-



COURTESY PHOTO

Gulfshore Homes Montserrat model in the Bonita Bay Group's Mediterra development.

gan residents Dave and Pat Gibbons, who purchased Gulfshore Homes' Montserrat model last fall.

"We wanted to be warm this winter," said

Dave Gibbons. "I was retiring Nov. 1, and our goal was to buy an existing home and move to Florida for the winter. We bought the home last August and moved in Oct. 15."

Mediterra, he said, will become the couple's primary residence. The fully furnished model's ample square footage will accommodate visiting children and grandchildren.

Most of Mediterra's sales were co-brokered by independent real estate professionals, said Green.

Mediterra's sales in 2007 included 22 coach homes, nine luxury villas, eight single-family homesites, as well as the six models. Membership sales for The Club at Mediterra were also stronger in 2007, compared to 2006, said Kristin Cavella, membership director.

"We added 74 new members in 2007," she said. "A lot of other high-end clubs only added 15 to 20 new members last year."

One-third of Mediterra's new homeowners and members, she said, were referrals from existing members. Cavella said 80 percent of Mediterra's homeowners are golf or sports club members.

Bonita Bay Group is developing Mediterra with the same commitment to meticulous planning, environmental stewardship, integrity and attention to detail that is evident at its flagship community, Bonita Bay. ■