

REAL ESTATE & CLASSIFIEDS

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A GUIDE TO THE GREATER FORT MYERS REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Majestic Palms blends value with great location

BY BARBARA BOXLEITNER
Florida Weekly Correspondent

As potential first homeowners do, Ruben Rivera became a comparison shopper.

Rivera surveyed a number of gated communities in very different parts of Lee County. When he finally made his decision, the 24-year-old firefighter found a home conveniently located to work and play.

He purchased a first-floor condo in Royal Pointe at Majestic Palms, a Pulte Homes, Inc. development off McGregor Boulevard in south Fort Myers. Four-story condo buildings are featured in Royal Pointe, while carriage homes are the residence of choice in the community's other neighborhood, Sabal Pointe.

Rivera said his unit is within two miles of his workplace, the Iona-McGregor Fire Protection and Rescue Service District, and near Fort Myers Beach, where he kiteboards and fishes.

"I usually try to go out on the water at least once a week," said Rivera, who previously lived in a town home.

"The units are about the same size," he said about visiting other private communities, "but they all cost about 20 to \$30,000 more. You couldn't beat the price (here)."

In addition, he said the monthly maintenance fee was lower than that at other communities.

"The great location, it's definitely the draw to the community," said Jill Hoffman, vice president of sales and marketing of Pulte's Southwest Florida market. "With being so close to the beaches, the price is just phenomenal."

Marketing for Sabal Pointe began in September 2005, said Elizabeth Wendt-Kellar, public relations associate for Legris & Associates Inc. in Naples. Marketing for Royal Pointe started in June 2006, she said, and first closings for each were in 2006.

As of December, 152 homes of the planned 186 carriage homes in Sabal Pointe had been released, Hoffman said. The homes are located in 25 two-story buildings with either eight or six homes in each.

Sabal Pointe features four home plans, starting with 1,438 square feet of living area in a ground-floor interior plan for \$176,900. A second-floor interior plan of 1,857 square feet costs \$194,900. The neighborhood has three lakes, so most of the carriage homes have a



COURTESY PHOTO

Majestic Palms is a Pulte Homes, Inc. development off McGregor Boulevard in Fort Myers.



COURTESY PHOTO

Four-story condo buildings are featured in Royal Pointe in Majestic Palms.



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The Pheron Model



COURTESY PHOTO

The Spoonbill Model

water view. The pool is close to the cul-de-sac immediately left of the gate.

Retirees Donna and Gary Conley, both 64, live in Sabal Pointe. They visited a number of developments before opting for a two-bedroom, two-bathroom home with den and attached garage.

Donna Conley said their home is just the right size, more than 1,500 square feet, and they are happy to have a garage. They own a home out of state, but this is their primary residence.

"We liked the area, close to the water, the beaches," she said. "We liked it because it's a small development, and it was new."

Hoffman said 117 of 240 planned residences in Royal Pointe had been released for marketing as of December. Condos of 1,126 to 1,711 square feet of living area are in six mid-rises.

Royal Pointe is to the right of the gated entrance, where units in two buildings have a back view of the preserve there. The neighborhood pool is centrally located between the other four buildings.

Rivera said his condo comfortably accommodates family and friends for stays. His Caledonia model, which starts at \$180,900, has 1,623 square feet, the second largest among the four Royal Pointe plans. A kitchen borders family and dining rooms, and a screened lanai is at the rear off the family room.

"It's very spacious," he said. "It's an open floor plan with 9-foot ceilings."

Additional Pulte Homes communities are Whispering Palms in Fort Myers and Verona Pointe, Orange Blossom Ranch and Orange Blossom Groves in Naples. Pulte is among builders in developments such as River Hall and Sandoval in Lee County. ■

Sales up, traffic up at Bonita Bay developments

SPECIAL TO FLORIDA WEEKLY

Defying current market conditions, Bonita Bay Group sold 28 units in four of its communities during January, double the number of sales recorded during January 2007. The sales included single-family homes and homesites, coach homes and villas in Verandah in Fort Myers, Mediterra in North Naples, Sandoval in Cape Coral and TwinEagles in Naples, generating a sales volume of \$13.7 million.

"We think a combination of factors pushed January sales," said Gary Dumas, regional general manager for Bonita Bay Group. "Mortgage rates are good, people are tired of waiting, and our communities offer not only a range of attractive residential options, but also the lifestyle people picture when they think of Southwest Florida."

And that caught the eye of a noted econo-

mist.

"Bonita Bay Group's January sales numbers are a good indication that we are nearing the bottom of the market in Southwest Florida," said Henry Fishkind, who heads an Orlando-based economic and financial consulting firm established in 1987. "It's no surprise that homebuyers are drawn to the communities developed by Bonita Bay Group, a company that has a strong track record and is in the market for the long haul."

People realize that now is a great time to buy a home, said Joe Ballarino, founder and president of Amerivest Realty and past president of the Naples Area Board of Realtors. "And Bonita Bay Group's reputation and longevity make their communities particularly appealing. Buying from a developer who is well established and respected

in the market is always a smart move, but particularly important now."

NABOR reported that pending sales during December were down by only two units - 275 to 277 - compared to December 2006, an indication of the beginning of a steady selling season.

"We've worked hard to respond to the needs of the market and to be as competitive as possible," said Dumas. "In addition to the increased buyer demand, we're also encouraged by increases in traffic to our sales center - up by 20 percent from last year, and with a 22 percent increase in first-time visitors. This is a positive indicator of future sales and gives us reason to enter 2008 with a sense of cautious optimism," said Dumas.

To encourage homebuyers to visit its communities, for a limited time Bonita Bay

Group is underwriting incentives such as club memberships and master homeowner association fees.

Bonita Bay Group is a diversified, privately-owned company involved in the planning, development, sales and management of master-planned communities, free-standing recreational amenities and commercial facilities. The company is respected for its commitment to meticulous planning, environmental stewardship, integrity and attention to detail. Bonita Bay Group employs more than 1,300 individuals and is currently developing six master-planned communities - Bonita Bay, Shadow Wood Preserve, Mediterra, TwinEagles, Verandah and Sandoval - along with 14 golf courses and two marinas. Additional information about the company is available at www.BonitaBay-Group.com. ■