

Georgetown to get first green subdivision

Builder will create environmentally friendly master-planned community

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Georgetown is getting its first all-green subdivision. Green Builders Inc. is creating an 800-acre master-planned community with 2,000 houses that will be environmentally friendly and feature rain harvesting and energy-saving heating and cooling systems.

Georgetown Village will offer 15 floor plans, from 1,800 square feet to 2,400 square feet. Several models are near completion. The homes, to be built in the next six to eight years, will be priced from the low \$200,000s to the \$500,000s.

Clark Wilson, a longtime Central Texas developer, acquired Austin-based Green Builders from builder Victor Ayad in the summer.

"I thought: What's going to be the next greatest thing?" Wilson said.

Each home will be built with foam insulation in the walls and roof. The heating, ventilation and air conditioning as well as the water heater and plumbing are centrally located to improve efficiency.

The homes also are being built with recycled lumber and local natural stones.

Wilson said the company is trying to build as many homes facing north and south as possible, to reduce direct exposure to the sun. The rest of the homes will be designed with large awnings or overhangs that provide shade.

"They're beautiful homes and will have 50 to 60 percent (energy) savings" over a traditional home, Wilson said. "They don't have to be very, very expensive and only for the few."

There are other green residential projects in Central Texas, including the redevelopment of the former Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, which is following strict green building design standards. All homes there will meet a minimum of a three-star rating by Austin Energy's Green Building Program. Mueller's individual buildings, including Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas, have been certified through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System, the national nonprofit organization that sets standards for green buildings.

Endeavor Real Estate Group LLC will seek national or local green certification for 4,500 multifamily units at the Domain in North Austin.

Wilson consulted with well-known green architect Elliot Johnson, who has worked with Austin Energy's Green Building Program since 1992, to create his own energy-rating star plan for the Georgetown homes. Wilson also plans to seek certification from the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program and has implemented guidelines from other green rating organizations.

"The rating program we used in-house is modeled closely off Austin Energy's," said Johnson, of Austin-based Images Of ... architecture firm. "These homes would definitely rate five-star in the Austin Energy's rating program. They're doing everything above and beyond what is required for five-star."

The project probably will have about 75 acres of commercial development, but the plans aren't final. Wilson said he might enter into a joint venture with a retail developer who is environmentally friendly.

Georgetown's chief long-term planner, Ed Polasek, said he did not work directly with the Georgetown Village project but welcomes such eco-friendly developments. "Anything that would help us with long-term water supply" is a plus, Polasek said. "That would be ideal, the way energy prices are going. ... Anything to keep those costs down locally is ideal."

Wilson plans to build three other subdivisions that are environmentally friendly.

Rutherford West in Driftwood will be an 800-acre community, with 400 acres set aside as a conservation area. The development, which will take two to four years to complete, will have homes from the mid-\$300,000s to more than \$600,000. The 1.5-acre lots will be sold separately, with half going to the conservation easement. The model home is under construction.

Elm Grove in Buda, which will take two to three years to build, will have 320 green homes priced from the low \$200,000s to the low \$300,000s.

And the 530-acre New Sweden Community in Pflugerville, which has not broken ground, will have 1,600 homes. The project, which is expected to take six to eight years to complete, will have organic farming, a community garden and a catfish pond. The organic farming will be cared for by tenants; the community garden will be tended by the homeowners association, Wilson said.

"The idea is that you never have to walk more than five minutes to either get to open space or the community garden," Wilson said. "You create a community that when they get home, they don't want to leave."

Courtesy of JB Goodwin



Georgetown Village

