

Award for efficiency

Local developer revitalizes project with green building

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By Cheri Harris

A local developer hopes to revitalize his latest project by anticipating what customer needs will be when the new home market turns around. His efforts have already received accolades.

Tom Chancey said he opened Heritage in Hernando about four years ago — just in time for the end of the housing boom and the beginning of the downturn.

So far, Chancey said, he has sold about 20 of the 70 homesites in the gated community for adults age 55 and older.

After watching a number of his friends being forced to leave the area in recent years to pursue opportunities elsewhere as the market stagnated, the 64-year-old developer, whose projects include Arbor Lakes, decided he needed to take a different approach.

Instead of selling homes up North for \$500,000 to \$600,000 and shopping for Florida homes in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 price range, Chancey believes the next wave of home buyers will sell their homes for less and also expect to pay less.



*Photo by Dave Sigler
Walt Stachowicz from Conservation Plus blows smoke into the vent system of a house being built to Energy Star standards in Heritage, a development near the intersection of County Road 486 and Forest Ridge Boulevard in Hernando. Builder John Osborne of Pinecrest Building Corp., Tom Chancey, developer of Heritage, and Richard from the Big Brothers Big Sisters program look on. All the vents are sealed up and the entire system is filled with smoke to check for leaks in the cooling system. The house received an Exceptional Energy Award from the Florida Public Utility and Central Florida Gas in the Spring 2010 Parade of Homes.*

“These people who will be in the market have struggled, too,” Chancey said.

In addition to lower price tags, Chancey believes homebuyers will be looking for smaller, more efficient houses that result in lower energy bills.

That’s why Chancey has decided to relaunch Heritage, hiring Pinecrest Homes to build a smaller model home to Energy Star requirements and following green building practices to meet the standards of the Florida Green Building Coalition. After the model is finished, he plans to have a ribbon cutting and other festivities to relaunch the community.

“We’re bringing it back to life,” Chancey said. “We’re trying to get people to see Heritage in a different way, as something that’s new and innovative.”

Chancey said last week he was slated to receive an Aurora Award for design for Heritage on Saturday during the Southeast Building Conference in Orlando. (For more information, visit www.seeheritagenow.com.)

John Osborne, president of Pinecrest Homes, said winning an Aurora Award is an important accomplishment.

He won an Aurora last year in the “Energy Efficient Home” category for a home he built in Beverly Hills.

Osborne said Traditions, the new model home in Heritage, belongs to two different worlds because it has a traditional look but features energy-saving technology of today and is expected to use about 15 percent less energy than a comparable home.

Features in the model include mastic sealant on all joints and connections for the air conditioning duct system to prevent leaks. It also has a tankless water heater, additional insulation and more efficient windows.

Chancey said creating a more energy-efficient home has been a collaborative process with him, Osborne, Mitch Underwood, who is the other builder in Heritage, Progress Energy and Central Florida Gas.

“We just really felt like this was the right thing to do,” Chancey said.

Josh Wooten, CEO of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, said if Chancey is successful it would help other businesses, help build the property tax base and create jobs.

At a recent economic summit, Wooten said a guest speaker urged business owners struggling in the current economy to find another niche and branch out in order to enhance their business models.

“I think that’s what this project is doing. It has so many benefits,” Wooten said, “and that’s what they’re looking to do is to brand themselves as new and exciting and visionary, and I think it’s going to pay big dividends for them.”

Chronicle reporter Cheri Harris can be reached at 564-2926 or charris@chronicleonline.com.