

WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

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Rendering depicting the view towards Downtown Wellen from the 80-acre grand lake.

PICTURE THIS

A DOWNTOWN HUB CALLING TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Worthy of an Instagram or Facebook post.. That's the image Wellen Park President Rick Severance has in mind for the area's newest downtown. Construction is scheduled to begin mid-August. It is expected to be completed in late 2022, Wellen Park officials say.

"There are just a lot of really thoughtful elements that I think will be both interesting and fun," Mr. Severance says. "The downtown will be a central location for the community; it provides a great sense of place. It will be the heart and soul of Wellen Park."

SEE DOWNTOWN , A14 ►



◀ A signature shade structure across from the Brewpub building will provide an area for visitors to enjoy socializing with friends and neighbors.

▼ The food truck park area will offer a casual dining experience.



Wellen Park's Town Hall to Anchor Downtown

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Amidst all of the features coming to Downtown Wellen, Wellen Park's Town Hall will be a sight to behold.

As architectural firm Khoury Vogt describes it, the future landmark will be a "freestanding

civic building in Wellen Park's downtown, adjoining four very different adjacent settings."

At first glance, the hall's main building may appear simple. But at closer look, the design cleverly connects inside spaces with the outside.

"While the hall's main building form is quite simple — a tall, gabled meeting room at the

center — its four sides are quite different, each responding in form and scale to the adjacent context," says Erik Vogt, a founding partner of the firm.

Positioned at the bank of the 80-acre Grand Lake and next to the sunset green event lawn, the building will provide expansive views that will feel like an extension of the space. The

Town Hall will also face the main boulevard into the downtown area and a public use green space. The side of the building facing the sunset green event lawn will house a performance stage that will be used for outdoor concerts and various art productions.

"We knew we needed something that had

SEE TOWN HALL, A16 ►

Sip 'n' Serve

The Art of Tequila Tasting at Irma's Tacos. A12 ►



Pet parade

A celebration of Wellen Park's adored and adorable animal companions. A18 ►



Coming up

See what's happening around Wellen Park this summer. A32-33 ►



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AROUND TOWN

Learning for Living—and Loving It

BY MARTY FUGATE

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Lifelong Learning is such an intuitive concept, you'd think it would sell itself.

Sadly, a few people still believe in the discredited old paradigm. You know the one: "Education is a painful chore you endure before life happens. After that, you're in the 'real world' and learning stops."

That old-fashioned concept still exerts a strong tidal pull. But the tide is starting to turn. Just ask Michele Groves. She's the assistant dean of lifelong learning and workforce development at State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota. Lifelong learning is her life's work. Over the last decade, Ms. Groves has watched a renaissance of lifelong learning possibilities across the nation. Thanks to her work at SCF, she's also been a part of this transformation.

As Ms. Groves described it, SCF serves as an educational hub for people living throughout the greater Manatee-Sarasota area.

"We offer the majority of our lifelong learning classes at our three campuses in Bradenton, Lakewood Ranch and Venice," she says. "But we can also offer noncredit classes at community-based locations as well."

According to Ms. Groves, SCF's lifelong learning curriculum embraces the full spectrum of life and work. Its courses offer learning opportunities for both workforce development and personal enrichment. What does that mean exactly?

It depends on the person.

"Our personal enrichment courses provide opportunities for learners to engage in person-

al interest or self-enrichment topics," she says. "Think anything from music, voice, and theatre to arboriculture and when and where to plant trees."

Self-actualization in the classroom, in other words. What about workforce development? How does that work in practice?

"In practice, it means bridging the skills gap between formal education and the requirements of industry," Ms. Groves says. She added that it's a big gap — and SCF strives to close it with its workforce development courses.

"Training in employability skills is in high demand today," she says. "There's a new focus on higher-level critical thinking skills, competencies and the mindset needed for a success in the working world."

Ms. Groves added that SCF's workforce development training has been life-changing for many students. "Many of our courses lead to industry certification in high-demand fields like manufacturing and information technology," she says. "These certifications allow an individual to add to their skillset and better themselves at their current jobs through raises and promotions, or springboard to new careers. We work closely with local employers to understand their training and employment needs for today and tomorrow."

Along with spanning the life-work spectrum, SCF also covers the age spectrum. As its kids' summer camp proves, not all of its lifelong learners are working age adults or retirees.

"We have kids on campus... all summer long. This year, we are offering STEM-tastic summer camps for elementary, middle, and high school aged students." Elementary kids have half-day camps at SCF Lakewood Ranch, focusing on Minecraft, game design, and robotics. Middle and high school students will experience full-day camps located in the 26 West Center at SCF Bradenton and focusing on robotics, engineering,



COURTESY PHOTOS

Lifelong Learning greenhouse

and coding. (Additional information can be found at Coding.SCF.edu.)

It sounds like a lot of fun. Her happy reply? "It is."

She quickly added that the kids aren't having all the fun.

"SCF is dedicated to providing quality lifelong learning classes for people of all ages," she says. "Whether the content is geared toward a new hobby, developing professionally, or just learning something new, there's something for everybody." ♦

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WELL VERSED

Hop on the High-Speed Information Highway

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Homebuyers in Wellen Park's Playmore District will have blazing fast internet access at their fingertips, courtesy of Hotwire Communications.

Can you imagine having a private, one-to-one consult in your home with your internet provider? No? Well, that is not a dream, but a reality. Hotwire prides itself on its concierge service and has been affording it to its subscribers since the company was founded in 2000. Your rep will work with you to determine precisely what your needs are and help you build a custom package.

Once you sign on the dotted line you won't be abandoned after the neighborhood launch is completed. A dedicated manager and specific technicians will be available to subscribers around the clock, seven days a week to answer questions and address any problems.

A South Florida company, Hotwire delivers premium internet, telephone and television service to swank, high-end communities throughout Florida and neighboring Georgia and the Carolinas. It was the first company to invest in an all fiber-optic network in Florida and provides its subscribers fast, reliable service with a sophisticated touch.

"Residents who choose to live in Wellen Park want full, vibrant lives," said Rick Severance, president of Wellen Park. "Connection is important to them, whether that's connection with their neighbors, with nature or with the world around them. That's why Hotwire Communications is such an ideal partner



COURTESY PHOTO

for our Playmore District neighborhoods. Residents will be able to keep up with the news, stay in contact with their loved ones or work effortlessly from home with the help of a company that offers a high-quality product and exceptional customer service, at an extremely competitive price."

Hotwire Communications offers cutting-edge telecommunications and internet services to homeowners' associations, high-rise multi-dwelling units and gated communities in its service areas. Netflix has dubbed it the fastest consumer internet provider in the country. The company recently partnered

with Blackstone Tactical Opportunities and Backstone Infrastructure Partners to help scale its services as a premier telecommunications and internet provider. And PCMag named Hotwire the 2020 Fastest Business ISP in the United States, 2020

Fastest ISP in the Southeast United States and 2021 Best Gaming ISP in the southeast United States. And Cablefax named Hotwire the 2020 Independent Operator of the Year.

Are you tired of seeing circular pattern of

dots on your screen while your internet is buffering? Then you'll appreciate that Hotwire's end-to-end, future-proof fiber optic infrastructure allows customers to receive internet speeds of up to 10Gbps, more than 100 times faster than the average connection in the U.S. It also ensures there is no interference under normal conditions.

When customers receive Hotwire's HD and 4K streaming television, Gigabit-speed internet, and crystal-clear telephone services, there are no bottlenecks, no drop-offs in speed, low latency and unlimited use without data caps. Because its infrastructure is made entirely of durable fiber optics, it has the ability to upgrade subscribers to the latest advancements as they become available.

The network is monitored and maintained through Hotwire's operation center, which lives in a Category 5 hurricane-proof facility in downtown Fort Lauderdale. Network engineers keep an eye on the health and stability of the network day and night.

Several national and local homebuilders are developing neighborhoods in the Playmore District, including Neal Communities, Toll Brothers, Sam Rodgers Homes, Lennar and Mattamy Homes. Options range from condominiums and smaller villa homes to larger single-family residences with plenty of space for kids, grandkids or visitors.

Hotwire Communications will make digital life more convenient for those who choose to call Wellen Park's Playmore District "home".

For more information about Hotwire Communications, visit gethotwired.com.



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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLS

Community Planting Day will beautify and protect Wellen Park

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Here's a community project that everyone can truly dig into.

Wellen Park residents of all ages are invited to plant a variety of pine tree saplings around Grand Lake during Community Planting Day in early to mid September.

"People sometimes think that developers come in and tear down a lot of trees, but the Wellen Park land was a ranch that didn't have a lot of trees," says Rick Severance, president of Wellen Park. "We are creating something beautiful for the future. This day is an opportunity for our residents to put shovels in the ground, get their hands dirty, have fun and feel a sense of ownership about the trees."

Wellen Park is adding vegetation in two areas this fall. One spot is across from the Atlanta Braves Spring Training facility, which professional landscapers will work on. The second area will be around the Grand Lake in Downtown Wellen. Community members will help plant around the 80-acre Grand Lake, where the trees will enhance the walking trails.

People of all ages and abilities are invited to help with about 500 saplings that will be in 3- and 7-gallon tubs. With guidance from landscapers, residents will dig holes, add soil enhancers, plant the saplings and water the new plantings.

The day will include refreshments and light snacks, musical entertainment and children's activities.

A mix of long leaf, slash, and loblolly pine



was selected to enhance the aesthetic look of Wellen Park, provide shade along the trails, offer habitat to wildlife and increase the state's pine population, which has been impacted by pine bark beetles.

"Pines are critically important to the state," says Chris Cianfaglione, a landscape



architect with Kimley Horn. "Pine bark beetles are really ravishing large swaths of pine forest." He says pines get stressed and weakened from drought and hurricanes, making them susceptible to the beetles.

To help Wellen Park's new trees take root, an irrigation

COMMUNITY PLANTING DAY

- >> **Where:** Around the Grand Lake
- >> **When:** Early to mid September
- >> **What:** Tree planting, refreshments and light snacks, music and children's activities
- >> **Cost:** Free
- >> **Info:** Follow Wellen Park's social channels for details. @WellenParkFL

system is in place to water them during the dry season. Mr. Cianfaglione says the trees should be established in a year or two.

He says he recommended three varieties of pines because monocultures aren't healthy for trees and because the different trees will be visually appealing. He expects to mix in some live oak and southern red cedar as well.

The trees will provide nesting habitat and food such as berries and acorns for a variety of birds, including red-bellied woodpecker, red-shouldered hawk, northern cardinal, tufted titmouse and Carolina chickadee.

They will also help with stormwater retention, carbon dioxide filtering and oxygen production.

Mr. Severance says the plantings are a great investment.

"At the end of the day, we are looking to create new habitat that wasn't there before," he says. "As we develop Wellen Park and our neighborhoods, we put a lot of thought into common roadway areas and downtown." 🌱

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ALL WELLEN GOOD

Coming soon - Community Event Series

Step inside the Wellen Park Welcome Center, and it's quickly obvious that it's much more than just your basic information spot. Yes, prospective homebuyers can learn all about living at the wellness-focused community here. But it's also a warm and welcoming gathering place where current residents can relax and meet up with friends.

Created as an immersive, interactive community hub, the Wellen Park Welcome Center features a sleek design where artwork and other visual displays help tell the community's story. A breathtaking preserved moss wall that spans almost 40 feet illustrates Wellen Park's neighborhoods and topography, while a vertical electric bicycle display highlights the extensive trail and pathway network. "Heartfelt Connections," a custom art piece made up of lipstick kisses created by Sarasota-based artist Alexis Fraser (known as "Lipstick Lex"), shares the story of Wellen Park's heritage tree program in a unique way.

The displays give prospective homebuyers a feel for the community. But they also help create a comfortable space where current residents and other visitors can spend time and visit with friends while enjoying a cup of coffee, glass of wine or craft beer from the adjoining Barrel & Bean cafe.

Barrel & Bean offers locally sourced Venetian Coffee Roasters coffee and pastries in the morning, sandwiches and paninis for lunch, and small plates, wine and Venice-based 3 Bridges Brewing craft beer for happy hour and dinner. It's open to the public and operated by OTW Restaurant Group, which also owns Irma's Tacos in the adjacent Market-



COURTESY PHOTOS



The Wellen Park Welcome Center features a sleek design where artwork and other visual displays help tell the community's story.

place shopping center.

Food and beverages can be enjoyed alfresco at the spacious outdoor patio lounge area that runs the entire length of the building. It's a great spot for gorgeous sunset views, and a portion of the patio is shaded by a weather-responsive electric pergola.

The Wellen Park Welcome Center, Barrel & Bean and the adjacent lawn area will also serve as the location for an upcoming event

series beginning in this fall. The 18-month-long "Countdown to Downtown" celebration will kick off after the Downtown Wellen groundbreaking on August 18.

Expect a series of curated events featuring a range of makers, craft artisans and culinary talent. Current residents, prospective homeowners and the general public will be able to get a feel for the community's lifestyle and preview the kinds of experiences that will take place in Downtown Wellen once it's completed.

Whether you already live in Wellen Park or are interested in learning more about the community, we invite you to stop by the Wellen Park Welcome Center. If you already know why Wellen Park is a great place to live,

come on in and have a seat.

Brand ambassadors at the Welcome Center can answer questions and guide you through interactive touchscreen kiosks that display home plans, move-in ready and quick move-in homes and neighborhood and regional amenities. Look for them waiting to welcome you by the three-wheeled Italian Apé truck that's been retrofitted as a reception desk, another playful touch that helps show this is not your ordinary welcome center.

The Welcome Center is open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., and Sunday, 12 p.m.-5 p.m., at 12275 Mercado Drive in Venice, Fla. You can also call 941-499-8210 or visit wellenpark.com for more information.

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SHOT AROUND WELLEN
Barrell & Bean



COURTESY PHOTOS

1. Ben Jammin' — singer, musician and songwriter — entertaining on the patio of Barrell & Bean.
2. Mike Maguire and Mary Maguire, originally from Nebraska, have lived at Island Walk for five years.
3. Artist Sara Nelms performing at Barrell & Bean.

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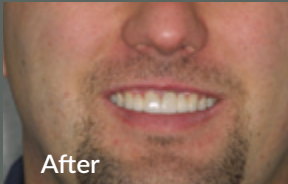
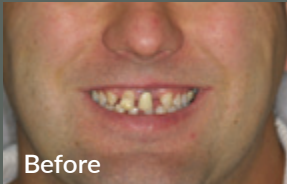
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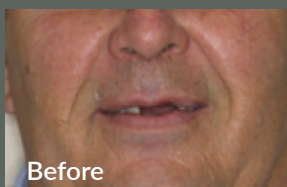
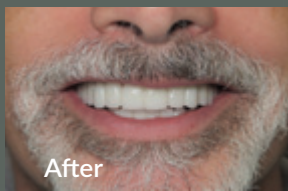
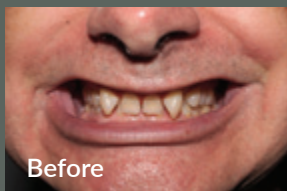
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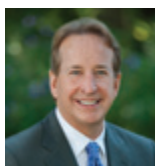
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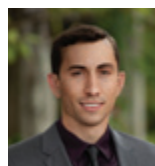
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SIP 'N' SERVE

The Art of Tequila Tasting at Irma's Tacos

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

There's a fun saying that "When life gives you lemons, grab salt and tequila."

That could summarize the attitude of Tommy Villani, managing partner of OTW Restaurant Group, which in July 2020 during the pandemic opened Irma's Tacos, Craft Beer and Tequila Bar, with an emphasis on tequila.

"Tequila has always been a passion of mine," Mr. Villani says. "It's becoming a liquor that has increasingly become more on-trend."

OTW Restaurant Group owns the Off the Wagon micro-brewery and restaurant as well as Barrel & Bean in the Wellen Park Welcome Center.



VILLANI

Irma's Tacos evolved after Hurricane Irma, when Off the Wagon only had supplies to make tacos. People loved the street and ethnic tacos, and a new restaurant was born.

Their specialty tacos include lamb shoulder, shredded duck, gator, shaved ribeye, crispy pork belly, chipotle BBQ pulled pork, Korean short rib, Nashville hot-fried chicken, fried cauliflower, and sweet potato and black bean.

"The food drives the business, but people do enjoy coming in for the craft cocktails," says Mr. Villani. "A lot of people want to learn about tequila."

Irma's Tacos offers 120 tequilas and 10 mezcals, a selection that Mr. Villani says is one of the largest in southwest Florida.

"You have the opportunity to try unique flavor profiles here you won't get anywhere else," he says.

All tequilas are mezcals, but not all mezcals are tequilas.

Mezcal is any agave-based liquor. Tequila is made only from blue agave and is produced in specific regions of Mexico.

They also differ in the way they are fermented and distilled.

Mr. Villani says tequilas are craft-like liquors made in small batches that can be enjoyed in cocktails, neat or over rocks.

"We have tequila aged five to eight years that a bourbon drinker would love, or for someone who likes whiskey or scotch, I'd give them a Reposado or mezcal they would enjoy just as much or maybe even more as their favorite



COURTESY PHOTO

One of the bartenders at Irma's Tacos pours a tequila drink.



COURTESY PHOTO

Irma's Tacos has weekly tequila flights, such as Clase Azul Plata, Casamigos ad Cincora.

whiskey. If you like a certain type of alcohol, I can point you in the direction of a tequila you would enjoy."

The team at Irma's Tacos will make cocktails such as a Manhattan, Old Fashioned or Cosmopolitan using tequila. They recently started selling their popular Blackberry Lime Margarita, Pineapple Agave and the Mi Campo Margarita in to-go cans, which can be bundled with tacos

to go.

"Tequila is the healthiest liquor you can drink," Mr. Villani says, adding that it is made with natural sugars and is low in calories.

Many celebrities enjoy tequila, Mr. Villani says, including Michael Jordan, who launched the Cincoro line, and Sammy Hagar, who at one time had an interest in Cabo Wabo Tequila.

He suggests people think beyond the popular

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Mi Campo margarita

COURTESY PHOTO

brands of Patron, Casamigos and Clase Azul. For example, he likes Gran Centenario, Blue Nectar and El Mayor, as well as other brands he discovers during annual trips to Mexico.

To encourage people to try tequila, Irma's Tacos offers weekly tasting flights based around a type of tequila or a brand. It's an opportunity to try three tequilas for the price of one.

Blancos, he says, tend to be a little spicier and heavier on peppery flavors. Reposados and Anejos are aged in American whiskey barrels, so they take on oak flavors and have a hint of caramel.

Mr. Villani emphasized that breathing correctly is key to enjoying tequila.

"I encourage people to smell it before drinking it but not while drinking it," he explained. When ready for a sip, "Breathe in through your mouth as you take a shot and exhale through your nose." This, he says, allows the tongue and

taste buds to identify notes such as caramel, vanilla or pine.

"Take a one-and-a-half-ounce shot in two separate shots," he says. "On the second shot, your mouth will definitely start to pick up the flavor notes."

In addition to offering tequila flights, Mr. Villani plans to offer instruction through Facebook Live videos, YouTube and perhaps in-person classes. 🍷

Recipe from Irma's Tacos

Mi Campo Margarita

- 1 1/2 oz. Mi campo Blanco
- 1/2 oz. Cointreau
- 1 oz. lime juice
- 3 oz. Tres Agaves
- Shake and pour over ice.
- Top with a floater of Gran Gala Triple Orange Liqueur.



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DOWNTOWN

From page 1

All the elements are lined up to make it a picture-perfect environment for residents and visitors to the south Sarasota County community.

Wellen Park covers 11,000 acres, including about 7,000 acres of undeveloped land. It is among the top five fastest-selling master-planned communities in the country, according to the real estate consulting firm RCLCO.

The majority of Wellen Park lies at the edges of unincorporated Sarasota County and within the city limits of North Port. Communities that are a part of the City of North Port include Oasis, Renaissance, IslandWalk, The Preserve and Gran Paradiso. The development, once known as West Villages, also includes in its marketing the communities of Sarasota National, Grand Palm and Boca Royale. And six new neighborhoods will begin selling late Fall/early Winter in Wellen Park's new Playmore District from builders including Lennar, Mattamy Homes, Neal Communities, Sam Rodgers, and Toll Brothers.

Downtown Wellen Park will include shops and restaurants, of course. But there will be plenty of imaginative amenities to shape a character unique to the development.

"This will be the gathering place where you can meet your neighbors and your friends," says Christine Masney, Wellen Park's vice president of marketing.

Plans call for the area to include an 80-acre lake, wellness trail and fishing pier, along with a mixture of amenities.

A permanent food truck park is one of those amenities. Another perk, a hammock grove, will beckon shoppers to rest a spell. A unique natural playground and splash pad are also planned, which will offer kids a new experience



Downtown Wellen at dusk.

where they can connect to a physical space and the environment of being on the water.

"We chose to make an investment not just in the trees, which create shade, but also designed a signature shade structure," Mr. Severance says. "It's a piece of art that is beautiful to look at, and extremely functional."

Mr. Severance says he envisions Wellen Park's downtown to be fun and a little funky. "We mean that. That's why we have a food truck area. That's why we have a kind of nontraditional playground. That's why we have wedding park and a hammock grove where we have hammocks integrated with mature trees."

"What I'm most excited about is how that permanent food truck area will integrate with the playground, the trail, the outfitter,

the outdoor bar, the heritage trees and the concerts," Mr. Severance says. "It just creates this amazing energy that doesn't feel stuffy. You're just as comfortable in your flip-flops and your shorts as you would be dressed up coming from a wedding reception."

"It's a healthy place," says Ms. Masney. "There are many ways to be healthy. It might mean taking your kayak or paddleboard out or fishing the 80-acre lake. It might mean hiking, biking or walking around our pathway. Or it might be a sunset happy hour toast with friends, or simply sitting under the big oak and relaxing."

The children's natural playground is another insightful use of space.

"It's not something you would find at an elementary school," Mr. Severance says. "It's

done in a way where it looks like it is part of the land. We've used the elevation of the land and natural materials. It's a place that is beautiful for Mom and Dad to sit while the kids are playing. It'll be entertaining, energetic. But it won't be what you would consider a traditional playground."

Mr. Severance wants to create a hub that appeals to the eye as well as to lifestyle.

"In today's world," he says, "if it's worthy of putting on Instagram, it's worthy. And it's not only teenagers posting about their experiences; our parents are the ones posting on social media."

"I trust that we've created a hub that's not just social media-worthy but more importantly, has a heartbeat and a soul." ✨

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TOWN HALL

From page 1

an unorthodox form in a civic scale,” says Mr. Vogt. “We wanted Wellen Park residents and visitors to fall in love with this unique space and visualize the limitless opportunities for fun and good times.”

In other words, function dictated form. “While it’s a very functional building, the ‘wow’ factor comes in with the design and use of the space,” says Rick Severance, president of Wellen Park. “People will enjoy it for many uses, whether it’s a community Mahjong tournament or something as intimate and memorable as a wedding.

Mr. Vogt says the design came together quickly.

“We’ve done this sort of thing in the past,” he says. “We’re honored to do it. These are important buildings. We knew we needed to have a main hall, so it was divided into main hall and ancillary space. It took the form of large gable. It has a traditional roof, if you think of New England town halls, and then we organized the spaces.”

Mr. Vogt believes the building will fit seamlessly into the larger motif of Downtown Wellen Park.

“It’s not meant to call attention to itself, but as a civic building the scale is different from the mixed-use building nearby,” he explained. “It will fit in nicely, and yet feel distinctive because it’s a civic building open for everyone to use.”

Mr. Vogt and his partner Marianne Khoury founded their practice in 2001 in Miami. Now based in Seacrest, the firm’s ties with Mr. Severance go back several years.

“Erik and Marianne Khoury and I have worked with each other off and on for over 18 years,” Mr. Severance says. “We have a strong



A rendering of Wellen Park's future Town Hall.

COURTESY IMAGE

affinity for each other’s work and they were basically hand-selected for this project. They have an amazing portfolio of civic buildings, as well as residential, that tied in perfectly for what we were envisioning. We expect that the town hall will become a beacon, not just in

great architecture, but in style.”

Well-known for their signature work, Khoury and Vogt are skilled in thoughtful building design that reflects impressive attention to detail and a fresh take on traditional architecture.

The result for Wellen Park is a Town

Hall that mixes comfort and delight in a multipurpose space that will be used for everything from performances and civic and social gatherings to perhaps even marriage ceremonies, fulfilling its intended role as a pillar for Downtown Wellen. 🏡

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LULA

Lula, the pool hog Bulldog.



GUNNY AND SARGE

Pool party with Gunny and Sarge
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BUDDY

Buddy is a miniature Schnauzer who lives in
Sarasota National with his parents, Becky and Gary.



SCARLETT AND BELLA

Scarlett the Australian Labradoodle and Bella the
Havanese enjoying summer in the **Renaissance**
neighborhood. They love Wellen Park.

Welcome to the **Wellen Park Pet Parade**, where we share pictures sent in by the proudest pet owners in our pet-loving community. Rest assured that whether your best animal buddy is a cat, a bird, a rabbit or even a reptile, we want to see it and share it in the Wellen Park Journal and on our social channels.

Submit your pet pics via email to info@wellenpark.com or via Facebook messenger [@wellenparkfl](https://www.facebook.com/wellenparkfl). We'll do our best to include them in the next Wellen Park Pet Parade and on our social channels.



PET TIPS

From veterinarian
Andrea Daniels of West Villages Animal Clinic
www.westvillagesvet.com



The **warm weather is here** and your furry family members, canine and feline, need special care.

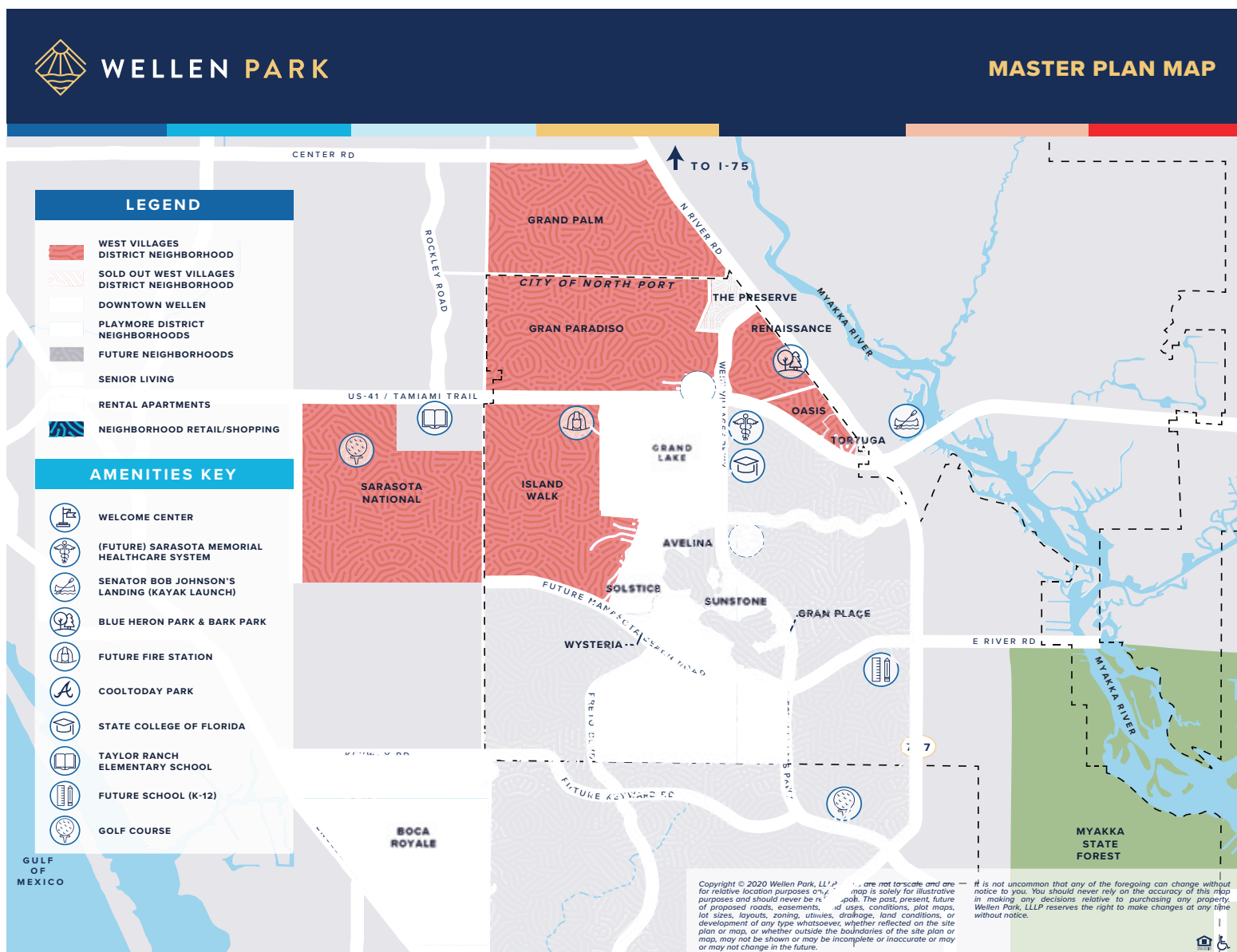
- Your cool cats need 3.5 to 4.5 ounces of water daily per 5 pounds of body weight and more if it's warm outside. Set out several bowls of **fresh water** and change the water frequently. Cats are funny about their sensitive whiskers so keep those bowls big and wide.
- **Brushing your kitty** friend will help keep that hair coat thin and smooth. Fur traps heat and long-haired cats get hotter faster. Keeping that coat brushed, with the undercoat removed, will keep them cooler.
- Cats do love to sit in the sun but if they're panting they are **way too hot**. Signs of an overheated kitty include panting, drooling, lethargy and a body temperature over 104. Get kitty into a cool area, on tile, wrap her in cool damp towels and call your veterinarian right away.
- Don't forget your **outdoor kitties**. They can get locked in hot sheds, cars or garages. Temperatures can rise quickly in these areas. Ensure your kitty doesn't get trapped in places like this.



- Dogs get much thirstier than we do in the summer so ensure they have access to plenty of **cool, fresh water**.
- Their normal temperature is a bit warmer than ours, from 100 to 103, but higher than that can mean a problem. **Signs to watch for** are heavy panting, dry or bright red gums, thick drool, diarrhea, vomiting and wobbly legs. Call your veterinarian immediately if you see any of these signs.
- **Never** leave your dog in the car.
- **Apply sunscreen** to your dog. They get sunburns too, especially those with thin or light coats. If spending a day in the sun, apply sunscreen every three to four hours to the least hair-covered spots: bellies, ears and nose. Use only sunscreens made for pets.

- **Don't shave your dog.** The fur is naturally designed to keep the animal cool during the summer and warm in the winter. Feel free to trim but don't shave completely.
- Exercise and walk your canine friend in the **early morning** and **late evening**. The middle of the day is too warm for your pets and the asphalt and concrete can burn their paw pads.
- If you take your pooch on the water, **consider a life vest**. Not all dogs swim well and even those who do would be safer with a dog appropriate life vest.
- Keep **all furry friends** free of parasites with a monthly preventative. Keep them away from fireworks and fireworks debris. And take them with you if you evacuate for a hurricane.





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Boca Royale	Neal Communities	\$\$\$																											
Gran Paradiso	Lennar	\$\$																											
Gran Place	Sam Rodgers	\$\$\$																											
Grand Palm	Neal Communities	\$																											
IslandWalk	DiVosta Homes	\$\$																											
Oasis	M/I Homes	\$																											
Renaissance	Mattamy Homes	\$\$\$																											
Sarasota National	WCI, a Lennar Company	\$\$\$\$																											
Solstice	Toll Brothers	TBD																											
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Medicare Information Right in Your Own Backyard

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Although none of us fancies getting older, age does afford us a few perks — like social security and Medicare.

Medicare isn't free, but your costs will vary depending on what type of plan you choose. And the choices are endless. There's Part A and B and C. Some folks are on Medicaid and Medicare, depending upon their income. Navigating the application process, deciding what you need and what company you will go with can be confusing enough, but then add the fact that plan and coverage change every year and you might be tempted to call one of those 800 numbers that are advertised every year during the enrollment period.

Most potential enrollees will consult with their friends, but friends might not be your best source.

By far, no matter what type of plan you wind up with, the best way to learn about Medicare's ins and outs is to sit down with an agent. There is no cost for a consultation and there is no obligation to sign with anyone.

You become eligible for coverage on the first of the month in which you turn 65. If your birthday is on the first of the month, you are eligible on the first of the month prior to your birthday.

One such agency with an office in Wellen Park is Freedom Health, Inc./Optimum Health Care, owned by Anthem. The office is a few doors down from Publix in the West Villages Marketplace shopping center.

"Before signing up for any Medicare plan, prospective clients need to do their homework. Check what doctors, hospitals and drugs are on the plan. Also, different plans have different out-of-pocket maximums.

Once the maximum is reached there are no more co-pays. There are other factors to take into consideration, which makes it important to talk to a pro."

— Scot Ritchie, benefit consultant with Freedom Health

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Although Freedom Health can only sign you up for one of their policies, the agents are knowledgeable and can point you in the right direction no matter what your final decision might be.

Freedom Health offers Medicare Advantage Plans, which are all-inclusive HMO policies with little to no premium. Insured clients pay the monthly \$148.50 fee directly to Medicare. Medicare, in turn, pays the advantage plan insurer and the insurance company administers the Medicare benefits.

Depending on which plan a client has and what Medicare-sanctioned chronic underlying conditions the client has, there might even be a refund of all or most of what is paid to Medicare. Generally, those folks are the ones who qualify for those "extra benefits" you've seen touted in television commercials.

Once enrolled, Medicare clients have the opportunity to go over their plans and make any changes during the enrollment period that takes place between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7 annually, according to Scot Ritchie, a benefit consultant with Freedom Health.

Although Medicare Advantage Plans are HMOs, emergency care is always covered even if a person is traveling (in the U.S.) and outside the network. "If you are in Texas and you have a medical emergency, your treatment is fully covered," Mr. Ritchie says.

Before signing up for any Medicare plan, prospective clients need to do their homework. Mr. Ritchie says Check what doctors, hospitals and drugs are on the plan. Also, different plans have different out-of-pocket maximums. Once the maximum is reached there are no more co-pays. There are other factors to take into consideration, which makes it important to talk to a pro.

Mr. Ritchie is happy to sit down with anyone curious about the program. He leads regularly scheduled workshops that cover it all.

"At the end of the day it's about what works for you," he says. 💡



RITCHIE

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SUMMER 2021

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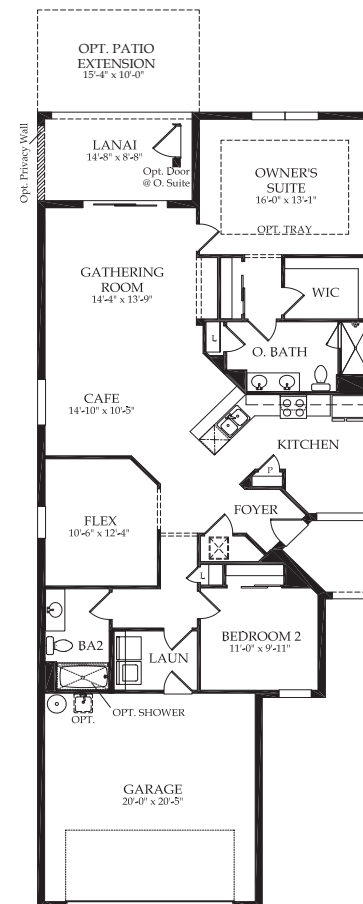
ISLAND WALK – DIVOSTA








Cascadia

The inviting single-story Cascadia Duplex at IslandWalk impresses with its open design concept, versatile flex space, and Owner's Suite with large walk-in closet.

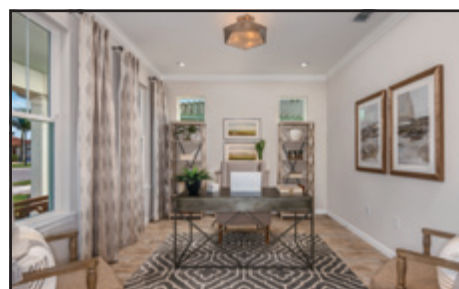
Sales center:
13639 Salinas St., Venice
941-220-0548



Specifications

-  Base price: Low \$300s
-  SF: 1,602
-  2 Bedrooms
-  2 Bathrooms
-  Home Type: Duplex

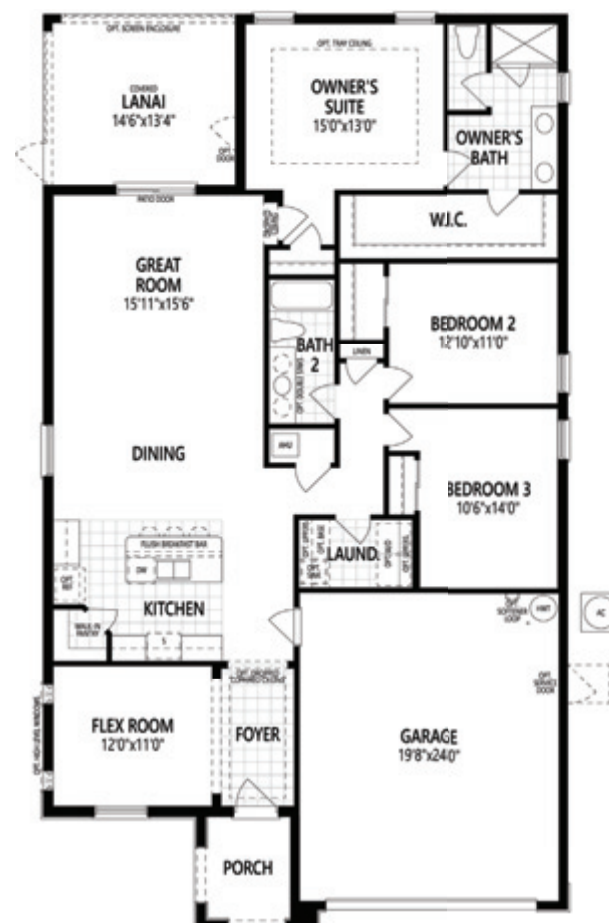
RENAISSANCE – MATTAMY HOMES



Riviera II

The Riviera II is an open and airy home with 1,937 square feet, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and a 2-car garage. This 1-story single-family home welcomes you with a cozy front porch in the coastal exterior style, or a covered entry. This open home design is highlighted by a designer kitchen with island that overlooks the dining area and spacious Great Room. A sliding glass door provides easy access to the outdoor covered lanai and brings in abundant sunshine. In the front of the home, a well-lit flex room provides a versatile space for you to use as a home office, hobby room or retreat. Two bedrooms are conveniently located adjacent to a full bath. A spacious, owner's suite is located towards the back of the home for privacy and includes an owner's bath with 2 vanities and an oversized walk-in closet.

Sales center:
11720 Renaissance Blvd., Venice
941-208-6375



Specifications

-  Base price: \$390,990
-  SF: 1,937
-  3 Bedrooms
-  2 Bathrooms
-  Home Type: Single Family

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

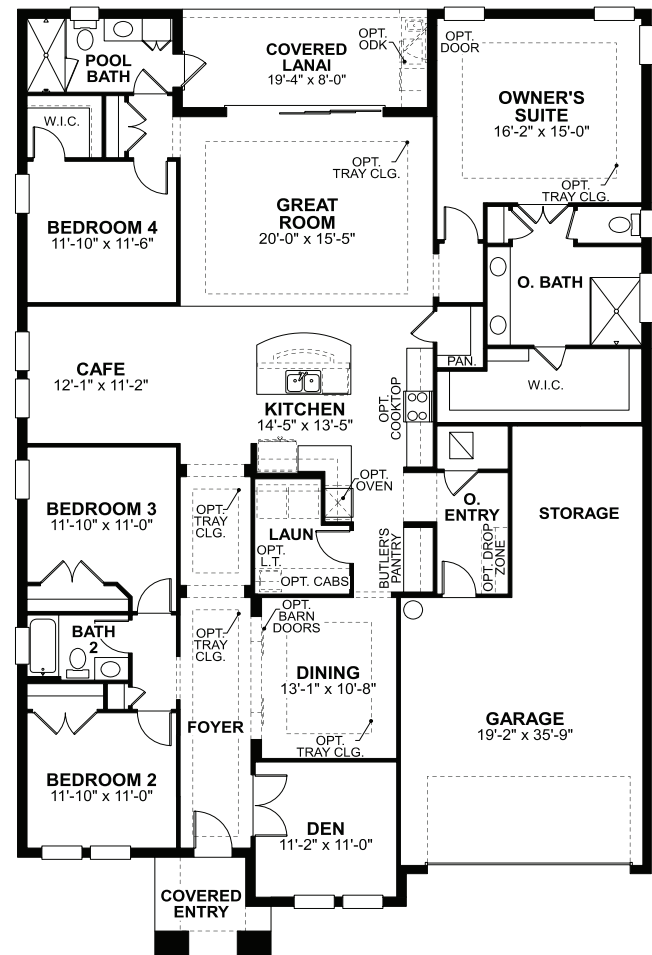
OASIS – M/I HOMES



The Jackson

A spacious and elegant design, the Jackson's standard layout includes 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a 3-car garage with additional storage space, and a den with a full separate mudroom and utility room. As you walk in the Jackson, you step through a covered entry into a long foyer. A den sits at the beginning of the house, creating a light-filled space for work or play. Two large bedrooms sit on the other side with a full bathroom. At the end of a long hallway with an optional tray ceiling, you are greeted by a large open concept space. The kitchen offers an informal dining nook, ample countertop and cabinet storage, and a full walk-in utility room. With clear sightlines, the kitchen opens out into the great room. Designed with maximum space for entertaining and family gatherings, the great room is backed by huge sliding glass doors that lead to a covered lanai. The owner's suite is fit for any king and queen with an optional tray ceiling. The owner's bathroom offers double sinks, an enclosed shower space, a separate toilet area, and a massive walk-in closet with the option to extend it even further. The mudroom provides a seamless transition from outdoors to indoors, featuring a 2-car garage with additional space that can be turned into a home gym or used for extra storage.

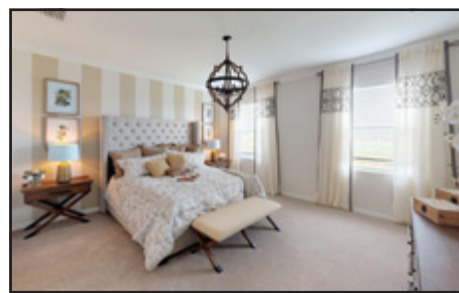
Sales center:
19806 Bridgetown Loop, Venice
941-208-6897



Specifications

- Base price: From the mid \$400s
- SF: 2,744 – 3,335
- 4-5 Bedrooms
- 3-5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

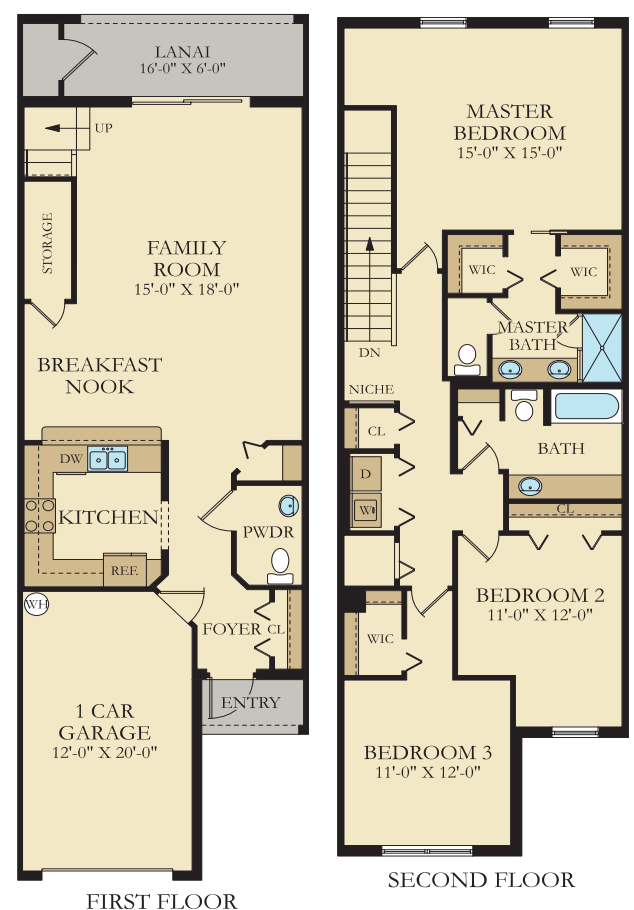
GRAN PARADISO – LENNAR



Berkly

The Berkly floor plan features 1,879 square feet of living space ideally arranged in two stories. The upstairs is where the three bedrooms reside with a convenient split plan with owner's bath and guest bath. The downstairs features an expansive family room and dinette off of the kitchen for multitudes of relaxation options. A downstairs half bath keeps guests from having to go upstairs and is the perfect priming spot before heading out. A large lanai is ideal for spending a lazy day reading or kicking back with a nice cool drink after a long day. The one-car garage keeps your auto safe from the elements rain or shine.

Sales center:
20061 Galleria Blvd., Venice
941-214-9684



Specifications

- Base price: \$247,999
- SF: 1,879
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2.5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Townhome

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

GRAND PALM – NEAL COMMUNITIES



Endless Summer 3

One of our most popular floor plans, Endless Summer 3 by Neal Communities features at its heart a open and welcoming common living area that encompasses the kitchen, breakfast nook, great room and formal dining room. Cooking up a meal in the gourmet kitchen with island and walk-in pantry is a pleasure. If you want to dine al fresco, add an outdoor cooking wall on the large lanai, entered through sliders in the great room. The lanai also offers the option of a pool bath. The opulent master suite includes the option of an elegant coffered ceiling in the bedroom and features two walk-in closets and master bath with a French door entry, dual sinks, walk-in shower, optional garden tub and a private water closet.

Sales center:
21209 Wacissa Dr, Venice
941-214-9190

Specifications

- Base price: Mid \$400s
- SF: 2,181
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

BOCA ROYALE – NEAL COMMUNITIES



White Star

Flexible and open, the White Star plan by Neal Communities is designed for comfortable living. At the front of the home, a formal dining room with direct access to the kitchen can optionally be a leisure room or a den. If preferred this area can hold a guest suite with private bath instead. The home's great room with optional octagonal coffer on the ceiling is open to the island kitchen and café dining area. Sliders lead out to a covered lanai. Bedrooms include the master suite, which features a large walk-in closet and master bath with walk-in shower and water closet, and two secondary bedrooms that share a full bath.

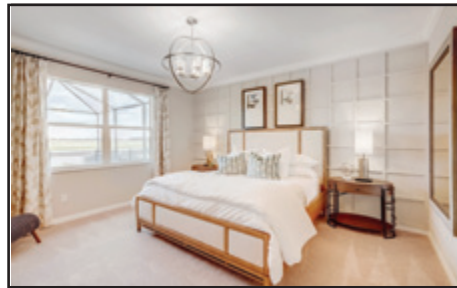
Sales center:
1 Golf View Dr, Englewood
941-214-9760

Specifications

- Base price: Low \$400s
- SF: 2,064
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2.5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

TORTUGA – LENNAR



Marsala

The 2,201-square-foot Marsala home is designed to entertain, featuring an open-concept kitchen and great room. A sumptuous owner's suite creates a personal retreat set apart at the back of the home with two walk-in closets and fabulous master bath. Two additional bedrooms each have their own private bathroom. The den is a great home office or hobby room. The Marsala is complete with a spacious covered lanai and two-car garage.



Sales center:
20061 Galleria Boulevard, Venice
941-214-9684

Specifications

- Base price: \$360,999
- SF: 2,201
- 3 Bedrooms + Den
- 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

SARASOTA NATIONAL – WCI, A LENNAR COMPANY



Roma

The living is easy with a perfect 1,917 square feet of under-air living space, featuring 3 spacious bedrooms, 2 full baths, a large 2-car garage and airy and open living room with sliders leading to screened-in lanai.



Sales center:
23114 Copperleaf Drive, Venice
941-246-0076

Specifications

- Base price: \$361,999
- SF: 1,917
- 2 Bedrooms & Den
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

NEIGHBORHOOD SPOTLIGHT

Tropia at Wellen Park delivers luxury rental options

BY EMILY LEINFUSS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Prospective Wellen Park residents were already asking about rental options when Rick Severance came aboard as president of Wellen Park in June 2019. Two years later the answer arrived with a resounding “yes” when Wellen Park announced last month that it was collaborating with Davis Development on Tropia at Wellen Park.

The new, 13.6-acre, luxury rental apartment complex will reside in Downtown Wellen along U.S. 41 between Radiant Way and Springtide Way. Leasing is expected to begin during the summer of 2022 on about 250 luxury one-, two- and three-bedroom residences.

“As a record number of people are deciding to make Florida their home, diversifying residential options within Wellen Park has become more important than ever,” says Mr. Severance. “With Tropia, more people will be able to experience life at Wellen Park as they take time to decide on a residence, wait for construction on their new home to complete, or simply prefer the flexibility of renting,” he says.

Amenities: Inside and Out

Tropia Wellen Park residences are fitted out for a luxury lifestyle. They will feature wood finish flooring throughout, spacious walk-in closets, and relaxing patios or balconies. The designer kitchens will offer modern cabinetry, custom backsplash, sleek pendant lighting above the peninsulas and granite countertops perfect for entertaining.

Like all Wellen Park districts and communities, Tropia is designed to support an approachable, fun-loving experience that focuses on living well at every stage of life.



COURTESY IMAGE

A rendering of the luxury rental apartment complex, Tropia at Wellen Park.

The pet-friendly apartment community will include an expansive resort-style pool with sunbathing ledge, outdoor amenity deck with cabanas, grilling and plentiful seating with lush landscaping. Inside, residents will enjoy a large well-equipped fitness center, hotel-inspired guest suites exclusively for residents’ guests, a brew lounge, and a cyber cafe with private offices and a conference room, along with other amenities.

And Just Steps Away

Tropia Wellen Park residents will be just a few steps away from the vibrancy and convenience of Downtown Wellen, which is slated

to open in the fourth quarter of 2022. Phase one plans include retail shops, waterfront and other restaurants, a town hall, a kids’ playground and splash pad, a food truck area, an outfitter equipped with e-bikes, paddle boards and kayaks for enjoying the 80-acre active lake and a three-mile health and wellness trail surrounding the lake.

The response by prospective residents of Tropia Wellen Park has been strong. “Customers are very excited about the renderings,” says Mr. Severance. Plus, the ramp-up for Downtown Wellen is coming along nicely. While he couldn’t reveal specifics, he confirmed that “six LOIs (letters of intent) and

five leases are in current negotiations.”

Partners in Development

Wellen Park searched for and found a complementary partner in Davis Development. The Atlanta-based firm, in conjunction with its affiliated companies develops, constructs and manages luxury apartment communities throughout the Southeast, Midwest and Southwest regions of the United States. “Davis has an amazing commitment to quality,” says Mr. Severance. The company “understands mixed-use projects and the benefits given to their residents with the proximity to shopping and dining.”

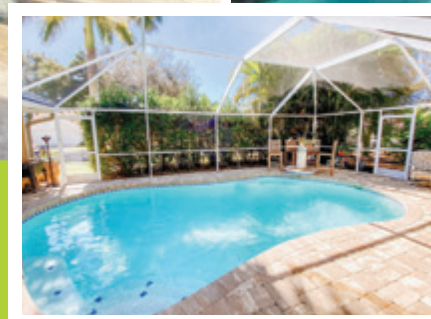


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SHOT AROUND WELLEN

Renaissance Community



1



3



2

- 1. Residents dance to the music at the Memorial Day Barbecue at Renaissance, sponsored by Mattamy Homes.
- 2. North Port's fire department visited the July 4 celebration and entertained the kids.
- 3. Residents held a golf cart parade to celebrate our nation's independence.
- 4. North Port's firefighters and EMTs take a break, July 4.



4

COURTESY PHOTOS



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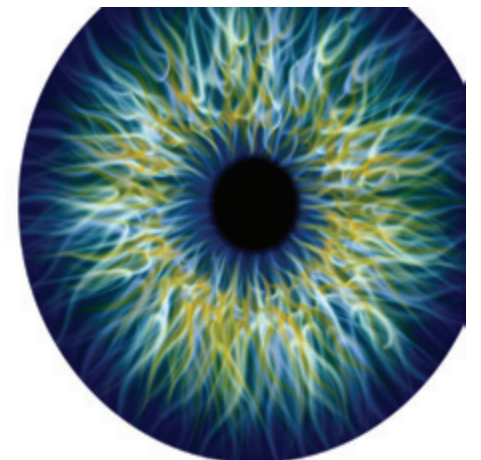
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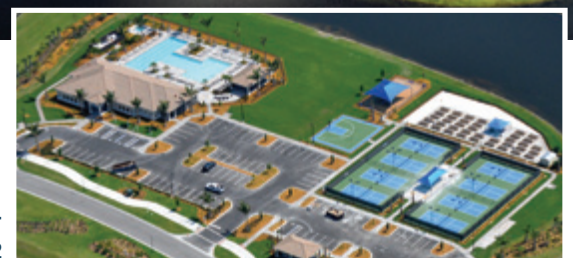


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HAPPY HOUR 2-8PM

SUNDAY
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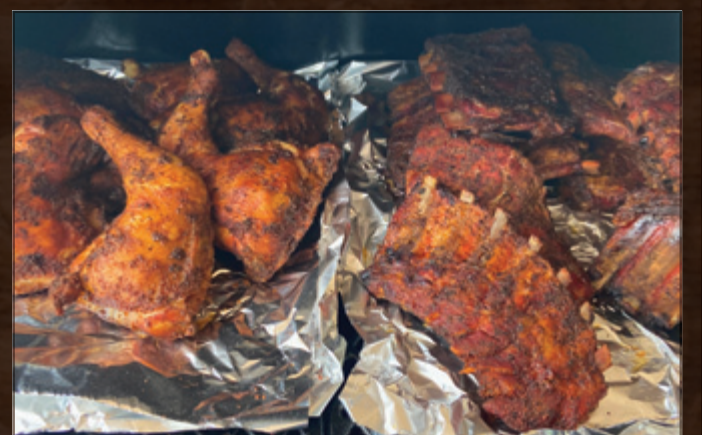
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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLE

EVENTS CALENDAR

Times and dates are subject to change. Always confirm details before heading out to events.

Through Aug. 08: Venice Theatre Cabaret Festival in Pinky's Cabaret. www.venicetheatre.org.

July 21: Summer Movie Night at Cool Today Park, 941-413-5004, ticket window at Cool Today Park open Monday through Friday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tonight's feature: "The Lion King."

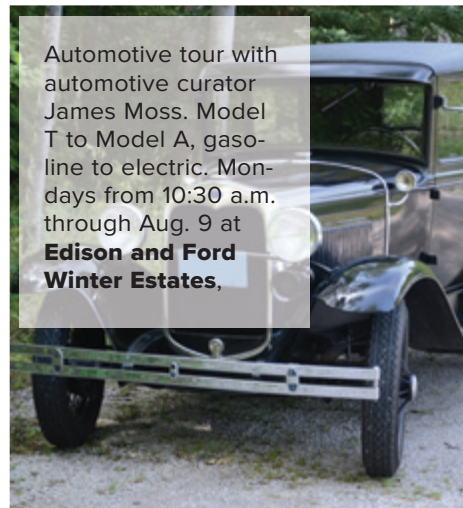
July 21: Clearwater – Ruth Eckerd Hall – REO Speedwagon. <http://reospeedwagon.com>.

Through Aug. 15: FST's Keating Theatre – "My Lord What a Night," part of a three-show subscription that also offers "Sophie Tucker: The Last of the Red Hot Mamas" and "Rounding Third." www.floridastudiotheatre.org.

Through July 25: Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, 1380 Colonial Blvd, Fort Myers. To reserve tickets: 239-278-4422. "The Southern Fried Farce of Nature."

Aug. 07: Family Campfire Circle, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Camp Caloosa – Open to girls grade K – 12 and their family members. "Join us for fun Girl Scout traditions around the campfire with time to walk around and explore the camp. There will be songs, skits, and of course, S'mores." Cost is \$5 per person. Note: A minimum of 20 girls and 19 adults is required to offer this event. 19931 Florida 31, North Fort Myers.

July 29 – Aug. 08: "Failure: A Love Story." The Laboratory Theater of Florida. Note: The



Automotive tour with automotive curator James Moss. Model T to Model A, gasoline to electric. Mondays from 10:30 a.m. through Aug. 9 at **Edison and Ford Winter Estates**.

theater thanks the Lee County School District for generously providing scholarships for students involved in this production.

Through Aug.09: Automotive tour with automotive curator James Moss. Model T to Model A, gasoline to electric. Mondays from 10:30 a.m., Edison and Ford Winter Estates, 2350 McGregor Blvd., Ft. Myers. Phone 239-334-7419.

Aug. 11: Summer Movie Night at Cool Today Park, 941-413-5004, ticket window at Cool Today Park open Monday Through Friday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tonight's feature: "Tom & Jerry."

Through Aug. 14: Grease is the word at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, Wednesday Through Sunday evenings, with selected matinees. Guests not fully vaccinated are required to wear a face mask in accordance with CDC guidelines.

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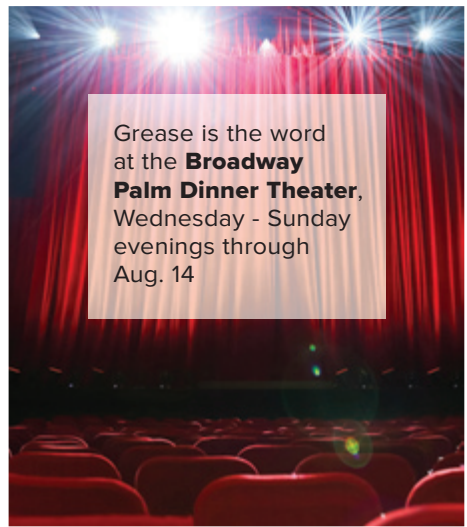
FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLE

EVENTS CALENDAR

Aug. 20: Tedeschi-Trucks Band, 7:30 – 10:30 p.m. at Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall, Ft. Myers. www.tedeschitrucksband.com.

Aug. 21: CoolToday Park and Carrier present “Majesty of Rock” in a one-night-only special show – 6:00 p.m. at CoolToday Park. Majesty of Rock is a talented group of musicians who banded together for the express purpose of faithfully re-creating the look and sounds of the two American super groups: Journey and Styx. Tickets available at www.ticketmaster.com

Aug. 21: Venice Plein Air Meet-and-Paint 9 a.m. – noon at Downtown Venice Centennial Park, 200 W. Venice Ave. <https://m.facebook.com/VenicePleinAir>.



Grease is the word at the **Broadway Palm Dinner Theater**, Wednesday - Sunday evenings through Aug. 14

Aug. 25: Summer Movie Night at Cool Today Park, 941-413-5004, ticket window at Cool Today Park open Monday Through Friday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tonight’s feature: “Jumanji.” (PG13).

Aug. 29: SW Florida Con Summer 2021 - collectors’ mecca convention. Comics, vendors (new addition: Sports Cards vendor and celebrity), live wrestling, guests, 125+ exhibitors, and attractions 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. www.swfloridacomicon.com Crowne Plaza Hotel Fort Myers at Bell Tower Shops. Note: Mask and temperature checks mandatory.

Sept. 03: Through Oct. 02: “The Color Purple” at The Laboratory Theater of Florida.

Sept. 04 – Sept 05: 12th Annual Downtown Venice Labor Day Weekend Craft Festival - 401 West Venice Ave in Venice. Free admission. www.artfestival.com

Sept. 08: Lemon Bay Playhouse opens.

Sept. 09: Oct. 2: Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, Ft. Myers – “A Night on Broadway” musical revue featuring past and most recent musicals. <https://broadwaypalm.com>.

Sept. 18: Venice Plein Air Meet-and-Paint 9 a.m. – noon at Downtown Venice Centennial Park, 200 W. Venice Ave. <https://m.facebook.com/VenicePleinAir>.

Sept. 25: Fort Myers – Randy House concert at the Ranch Concert Hall & Saloon.

Oct. 07 – Nov. 20: Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre, Ft. Myers – “The Sound of Music.” <https://broadwaypalm.com>.

Oct. 14 Through Oct. 23: “White Rabbit



12th Annual **Downtown Venice Labor Day Weekend Craft Festival**. Visit www.artfestival.com for details.

Red Rabbit” at the Laboratory Theater of Florida: “With no rehearsal, no director, a different actor each night, and a script waiting in a sealed envelope on stage, this show is a theatrical experience that reminds us of the transformative power of theater.” www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com.

Oct. 15 - Oct. 17: Sarasota Rocktoberfest at JD Hamel Park, Sarasota. Authentic Oktoberfest experience coupled with fantastic live musical performances - Friday 4 p.m.-10 p.m., Saturday 11a.m.-10 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m.-6 p.m. and admission is free. 199 Bayfront Dr., Sarasota.


Oct. 16: Venice Plein Air Meet-and-Paint 9

a.m. – noon at Downtown Venice Centennial Park, 200 W. Venice Ave. <https://m.facebook.com/VenicePleinAir>.

Oct. 17: Clearwater – Ruth Eckerd Hall – Pat Benatar and Neil Giraldo. www.benatargiraldo.com.

Oct. 24: Muddy Princess Mud Girl Run 2021 – 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. (Open for registration at 7 a.m.): an outdoor 5k obstacle mud-run for women participants only but spectators are welcome. <http://www.mudgirlrun.com>) Redneck Mud Park, 44570 Bermont Road, Punta Gorda.

Oct. 28: Estero – Jason Aldean at Hertz Arena. www.jasonaldean.com.



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ALL WELLEN GOOD



Rumor Mill Roundup

Hello Neighbors – It's time again for our Rumor Mill Roundup column where we feature a list of topics we've heard most often from visitors in our Welcome Center. Below are brief summaries of the "real story" for our most recent topics of interest.

■ **Hotwire Communications will be the cable television and internet service provider of the new Playmore District neighborhoods.**

Yes, we're pleased to announce the residential neighborhoods in the Playmore District will have fast and dependable and affordable fiber-based solutions for TV, internet and phone service from Hotwire Communications.

Residents of the Playmore District's neighborhoods will benefit from Hotwire's concierge-style approach, providing each customer with a white-glove service experience.

This starts from the moment a community is brought into Hotwire's network via the launch process, during which fiber is deployed and installed into every home. During launch, Hotwire meets with each customer for a one-on-one in-home consultation, determining the exact package of services and products to meet their individual needs. After launch is completed, the community is assigned a dedicated account manager who is responsible for overseeing all operations at that community.

■ **Luxury apartments are planned for Downtown Wellen.**

Davis Development has broken ground on Tropia at Wellen Park, a new luxury rental apartment complex. The 13.6-acre complex will be located in Downtown Wellen along U.S. 41 between Radiant Way and Springtide Way. Leasing is expected to begin during the summer of 2022 on more than 270 luxury one-, two- and three-bedroom residences. Davis Development will oversee both leasing and management for the complex. Stay tuned to www.wellenpark.com for more information on leasing.

SEE RUMOR MILL ROUNDUP , A36 ►



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Rumor Mill Roundup

From page 34

■ New restaurant planned for Marketplace.

Yes, the Marketplace food scene is growing! Late next year, you'll be able to grab your favorite foods for lunch and dinner at a new restaurant planned for the Marketplace. An American grill and bar offering freshly prepared appetizers, entrees, sandwiches and entertainment that appeals to all ages will join our existing restaurant line-up at the Marketplace. We can't wait to reveal all the details so stay tuned to our social channels



@WellenParkFLto learn more.

■ You'll be able to cast a line from a fishing pier in Downtown Wellen.

Have you ever heard the saying "Good things come to those who bait?" This will certainly be the case for residents who love to fish. When downtown Wellen delivers in Q42022 one can fish from lake's edge or from a fishing pier located along the SW corner of the 80-acre grand lake. The pier will extend to the deepest part of the lake so you can be assured you have the best spot possible to reel 'em in.

If you have a rumor that you want clarified, please don't hesitate to contact info@wellenpark.com



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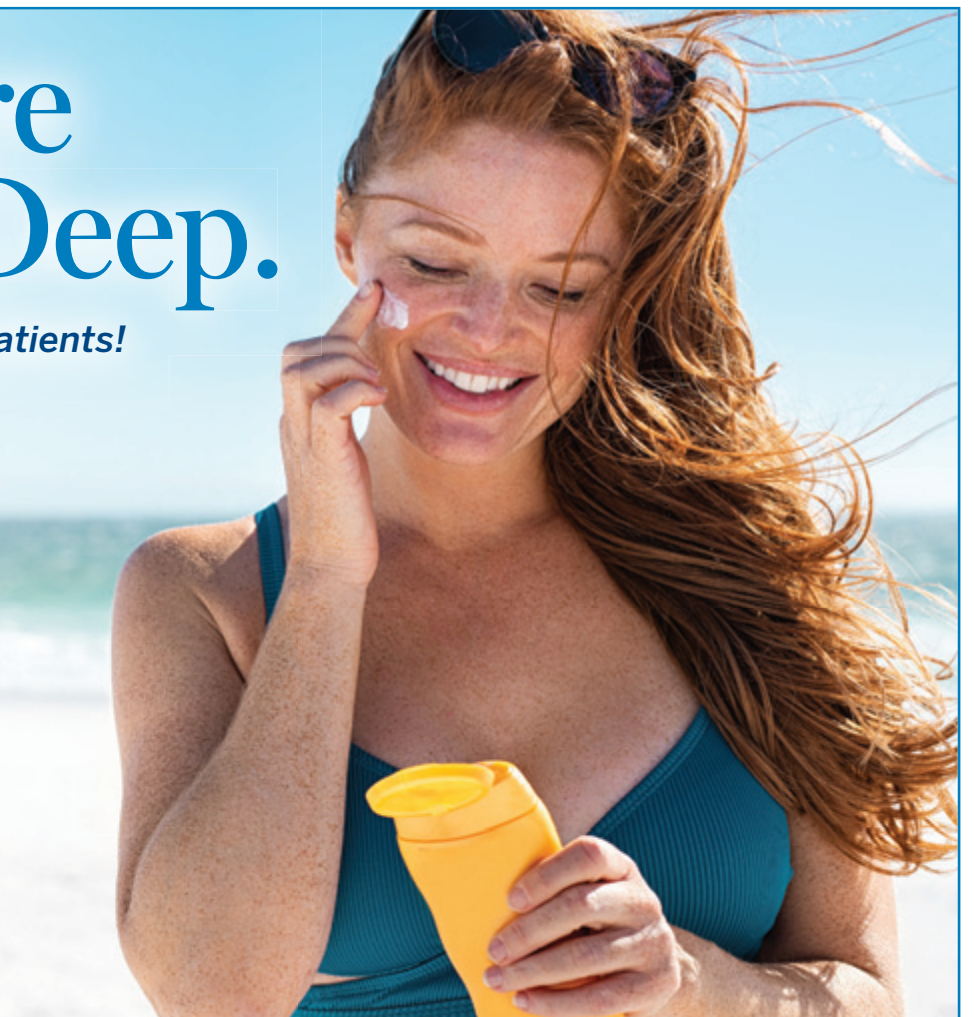
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MY STORY

Moving Together One Big Happy Family in IslandWalk

BY EMILY LEINFUSS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Sisters Ramona Abiera and Annette Kempisty couldn't just sit back and wait until their 96-year-old mom, Concetta Abeira, might be able to get back to the daily physical activities that kept her going.

In March 2020, the clubhouse facilities — including the pool and hot tub — at Concetta's 55-and-over community in Maryland were shut down due to the pandemic. Without her daily dose of fitness (it was way too cold to walk outside) Concetta had become depressed. "We couldn't watch mom not exercise anymore since that was her life," says Ramona. "Swimming was her passion," she says.

Further pandemic safety restrictions that kept the sisters from visiting their mom like before only made things worse. "For a few weeks we had only limited contact: looking at her through the window and handing her bags of groceries through the storm door," says Annette.

They had thought about moving to Florida several years earlier, but Concetta was simply not willing. "She didn't want to leave everything she knew behind," says Ramona. But now it was time for the sisters to get serious.



COURTESY PHOTO

First place in the Jingle Jangle Parade.

Searching for the Perfect Place

In the summer of 2020 Annette and her husband Raymond took a road trip and visited more than 20 communities between Bradenton and Naples. Still, they hadn't found a place that met their one non-negotiable: the residence needed to be within walking distance to the pool and hot tub so mom could go safely and easily on her own.

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Concetta Abiera relaxing in the pool and poolside.

Suddenly, Raymond's father became ill and the couple had to cut their trip short. "The second to last place we looked at before we left the state was IslandWalk," says Annette. The community was set to open its second resort-style amenities campus and two homesites were available right next to it. "I think it was a miracle," she says.

The two couples purchased a Cascadia Duplex, which are two-bedroom, two-bath, 1,600-square-foot connected homes. The plan: Annette and Raymond would live on one side and Ramona would be the caretaker for their mother on the other. Ramona's husband, Stephen Fry, takes care of his ailing brother on Florida's East Coast.

Florida Bound

Still, it took a ploy to get Concetta to agree to go. Ramona explained: "We convinced her by telling her we were going to move, but that she could stay in Maryland. We would make sure she had people to help

her. The next day she decided to go with us."

After coordinating the sale of three houses in Maryland, with the purchase and build-out at IslandWalk, the family moved to the Venice area in September 2020 to stay in an interim location. By October they'd moved into their IslandWalk homes and Concetta was back swimming, walking, hot-tubbing and, as it turned out, many more life-sustaining activities.

Not only is it easy to accompany Concetta to IslandWalk concerts and festivals, but the sisters also purchased a golf cart and ride their mom around the community in the evenings. Last Christmas they even won a best golf cart decoration contest in the Jingle Jangle Parade.

As a result, Concetta is beyond happy in her new home. Her daughters never tire of hearing these two phrases from their mom. "You moved me to paradise" is one. And the other? "Coming here saved my life." 🍷

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WELL VERSED

Welcome Center Celebrates Art in a Big Way

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Currently, the Wellen Park Welcome Center features works by three area artists, all quite different and all quite inspiring. Some of that art is visible to visitors even before they enter the building.

Artist Laura Pommier's colorful, 18-foot by 3-foot mural on the Welcome Center's exterior wall starts your visit with a captivating floral presentation of oversized, cheerful blooms that are sure to brighten your day. (Another mural of hers is in North Port where she was commissioned to contribute to the "1,000 Days" celebration of early childhood.)

Ms. Pommier also does painting, sketching and drawing, and will resume offering hybrid classes in those areas in August; students may choose to participate in person at the North Port Area Art Center or online via Zoom. (Zoom classes had been offered as a necessity during the pandemic and resulted in participants' forming new friendships across the globe.) Her pastel classes will be held in-person-only at the art center. For more information and class starting dates, see her website www.laurapommier.com, the North Port Area Art Center official page, www.northportartcenter.org or either one's Facebook page.

Once inside the Welcome Center you'll find some beguiling fused-glass pieces created by artist Pauline Stickler. Ms. Stickler says she always considered watercolors her "heaven," but since taking just one fused-glass class in 2005, she's been obsessed with the form and has been continually branching out and experimenting with it, just as she does with



A mural by artist Laura Pommier.

watercolors. Her pieces on display at the Welcome Center include anything from a delicate hand mirror to a whimsical bird bath or an impressively large platter. There are also small pieces (known as magnet art) that bring big smiles while taking up little space.

Ms. Stickler teaches fused-art classes on Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., at the North Port Area Art Center. See the Art Center site for details.

Also showing at the Welcome Center is Englewood-based artist Kathleen Hartman, who says she "just loves painting nature," and adds that her "main reason for painting is that I want people to feel something ... to make



A display of Pauline Stickler's fused-glass works at the Welcome Center.


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COURTESY PHOTO

Laura Pommier working on the Wellen Park Welcome Center mural.

a connection when they see my art." Considering the array of styles and subjects that Ms. Hartman embraces, it's difficult to imagine that anyone wouldn't embrace her work. As a young mother with two children, she filled the nights when her husband's business took him away from home by painting until dawn while the girls slept in the next room. The kids are grown now, but Ms. Hartman hasn't lost any of her enthusiasm for throwing herself into creating and teaching art at every opportunity. She enjoys a variety of subjects

— portraits to abstracts to seascapes — in several different mediums (including mixed). You never quite know what her latest show might include, but you can get an idea by checking out the welcome center and online at www.kathleenhartman.pixels.com. Her work is also frequently featured at the North Port Area Art Center, where she periodically teaches oil painting, pastels and a "Sketch-of-the-Week" class; call the art center 941-423-6460 for updated details. 📍

— See more artwork on pages A42-43.



An example of Kathleen Hartman's art. Ms. Hartman periodically teaches classes at North Port Area Art Center.



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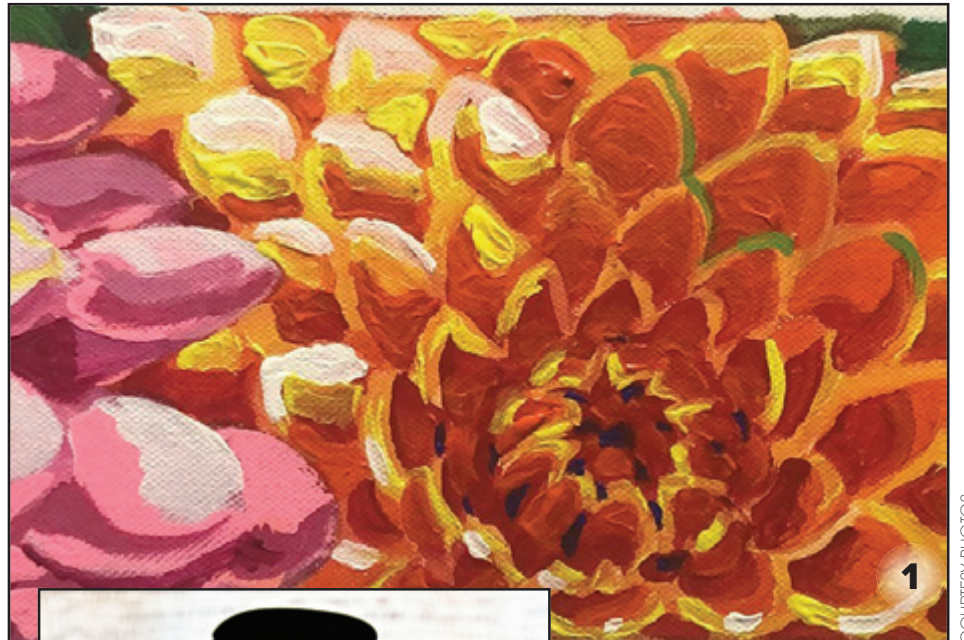
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Wellen Park Welcome Center



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1. A painting by Laura Pommier.
2. A Pendant by Pauline Stickler.
3. A fused-glass creation by Pauline Stickler.
- 4-5. Paintings by artist Kathleen Hartman.
- 6-7. fused-glass pieces by Pauline Stickler.

* Read more about the artists on page A40-41




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UPWELL

Pickleball, anyone?

Wellen Park residents enjoy the net benefits of pickleball.

BY MARTY FUGATE

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Let's get one thing out of the way: It's not played with pickles.

The game was invented in 1965. The hybrid sport was the brainchild of Joel Pritchard, a Washington State lawmaker, and a few of his friends. They cobbled it together from random sports gear scattered around Mr. Pritchard's backyard. Imagine a gene-splice of tennis, badminton and ping-pong and you'll get a pretty good idea.

In the years that followed, the game steadily gained in popularity. Over the last decade, pickleball reached the status of a national craze. West Florida was no exception. Neither was Wellen Park.

Pickleball's come to our community in a big way. According to Susan Geeslin, it's been here from the beginning. She's the Renaissance's clubhouse and lifestyle manager and she's seen the sport thrive here from day one. She's not a player. Peggy McHugh is. She's a Renaissance resident, and a pickleball devotee.

"People started playing pickleball as soon as our neighborhoods were built," Ms. Geeslin says. "It's amazingly popular with our residents!"

Ms. McHugh agrees. "As the Renaissance community continued to grow, the pickleball fanatics moved right on in as well. The games have been part of our lives from the beginning."

How do they explain the game's popularity? According to Ms. Geeslin, there are three



COURTESY PHOTO

Residents enjoying themselves on the court.

key factors. "Pickleball is healthy and low-impact. It's also easy to learn and highly social."

Playing for the Health of It

When it comes to medical benefits, pickleball definitely beats an apple a day. The sport is highly aerobic. Studies reveal that moderate to vigorous pickleball court action can lower blood pressure and boost cardiorespiratory health. Because the court is smaller than a tennis court, there's less running and fewer

sharp turns. Seniors can find the perfect comfort level. But that doesn't mean young adults have to slow down. How intense you play is up to you.

No Complicated Rulebook

Pickleball isn't rocket science — but it is like many other popular net games. If you can play tennis, ping-pong or badminton, you can play pickleball almost instantly. The sport is very easy to learn.

A Social Sport for Social Animals

This isn't a simulation on a computer screen. You're out there playing (and competing) with other human beings. It's a real-world interaction — and a great way to meet and get to know people. In a community like Wellen Park, that means people from all over the country. The tiny pickleball court opens up to a very big world.

Ms. McHugh adds a fourth explanation for

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UPWELL

pickleball's popularity. "It's a blast," she says. "Once I started playing, I immediately fell in love with the game. I've never had so much fun in my life!"

That sounds like a happy story. It is. But every story has a complication, even happy ones. Just when things are going great, the villain usually shows up. In this case, the villain was a virus called Covid-19.

The pandemic pulled the plug on pickleball. For safety's sake, Renaissance's pickleball courts and other amenities closed during the initial months of social distancing and quarantine. After six months, they reopened them to residents with proper social distancing. Pickleball fun in the sun was back.

Ms. McHugh describes it as a joyous day indeed.

"We all felt like children who'd been cooped up in school being finally let out to play," she says. "We were all so happy to be back on the courts with our friends playing pickleball again."

A few months later, Renaissance's courts were also open to the residents' guests. After that, it was game on. The sounds of laughter and the whack of paddles against whiffle balls filled the air once more.

Pickleball's been the name of the game ever since. And getting more popular every day.

Most of Wellen Park's neighborhoods all boast their own pickleball courts, along with many double-use courts, which can accommodate both tennis and pickleball. These courts are specific to each distinct neighborhood and not public. There's currently no official league for all of Wellen Park, but it's probably only a matter of time.

"I love seeing all the homeowners getting together and enjoying themselves," says Ms. Geeslin. "When I hear the residents laughing and having a really good time it truly makes my day." 🍋



COURTESY PHOTO

Island Walk residents during a recent tournament to raise money for breast cancer research.

PICKLEBALL 101

- » **Equipment:** Wooden paddles, whiffle balls and a net.
- » **Court Dimensions:** 20 ft. x 44 ft. for both singles and doubles.
- » **Net Height:** 36 inches.
- » **Age Range:** 6-96.
- » **Wellen Park Actively Selling Neighborhoods with Pickleball Courts:** Grand Palm, Gran Paradiso, Renaissance, Oasis, IslandWalk, Sarasota National, and Boca Royale.
- » **Pickleball Courts in the Future Neighborhoods of the Playmore District:** Solstice, Sunstone, Wysteria, and Wellen Park Golf & Country Club.

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WANDER WITH WELLEN

Matlacha — Tiny Island Village Bursting with Color and Personality

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Located off the coast of Fort Myers, about 60 miles south of Wellen Park, Matlacha Island lies between north Cape Coral and Pine Island. Pronounced Mat-la-shay, the name means Big Warrior in Seminole.

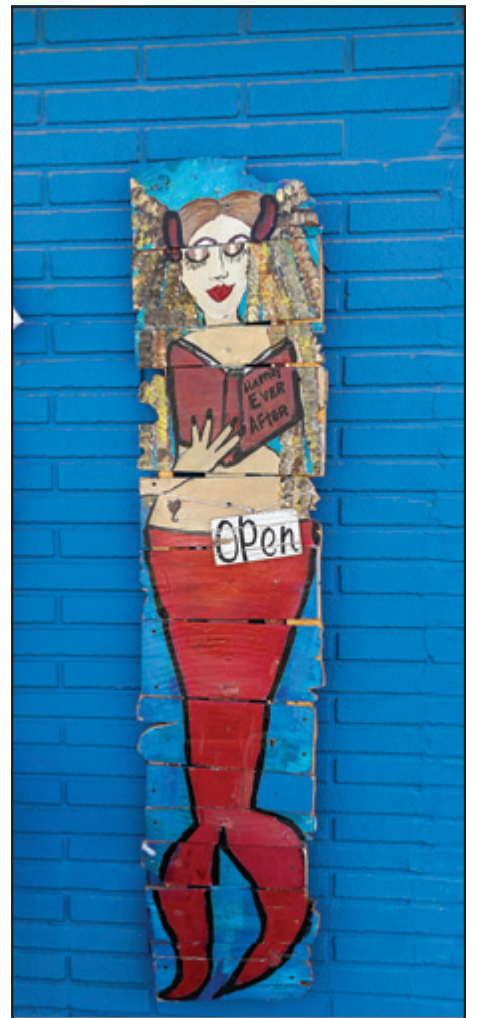
It's a fun and funky destination, home to artists and fishermen, and is a great little spot to fish, chill, shop and have a bite to eat.

Matlacha has its own laid-back personality and is a perfect getaway when you're looking for a tropical spot with lots of local color and it is much closer than Key West.

The island is abundant with fish camps, galleries and clothing, jewelry, crafts souvenir and shoe shops and the merchants always sport a friendly smile.

Driving up and down the main drag, visitors delight in the colors — bright, island colors — lots of cottages, some of them can be rented.

Life is easy here. Fish, kayak, eat lunch, have an ice cream cone, chat with the locals and bring home some artwork, a ceramic craft or a hippy dippy outfit.



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Magic bus at Lovegrove Gallery and Gardens

PATRICIA HORWELL / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL



Water view at Bert's

If you decide to make your visit last more than a day there are several hotels, including the Bridgewater Inn, Matlacha Cove Inn and Pine Island Paradise Resort. There's even a tiny house hotel — Matlacha Tiny Village.

Some favorite food establishments include the Blue Dog Bar & Grill, Olde Fish House Marina and Bert's Bar & Seafood Grill. The seafood is fresh and the prices reasonable. Bert's boasts a deck with a water view and live steel drum music. Pop into Great Licks Ice Cream Shop for a hand-packed cones and cups in a variety of flavors.

But despite its sleepy, small-town atmosphere, Matlacha is home to international artist Leoma Lovegrove. Her gallery, Lovegrove Gal-



lery and Gardens, is filled with her paintings — all with vibrant colors like the rest of the island. Don't leave her gallery without visiting the garden, full of color and whimsy. ♦



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