

WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

SUMMER 2020

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COURTESY RENDERINGS

NEW ADDITION

New North Port safety building coming to Wellen Park

BY LAURA TICHY-SMITH

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Kids seem to have a natural attraction to fire trucks, and by the end of 2021, the children and grandchildren of Wellen Park homeowners will have a big, new fire station with shiny trucks to thrill them. The City of North Port Fire Station 86, which the developers of Wellen Park have long planned to provide as part of the development, is finally becoming a reality.

The 24,000-square-foot City of North Port Safety Building being built at the corner of Tamiami Trail and Preto Boulevard will house a fire engine, ladder truck, two ambulances and 11 personnel in the four-bay building. The new facility will also help the city uphold its end on mutual aid agreements with the safety services of other municipalities.

Additionally, the city's new safety building will house a police annex, as well as a fire prevention bureau/plans examiner's office in the heart of growing Wellen Park.

"They'll be the primary fire plans reviewer (inspector) serving Wellen Park as it continues to grow, so it will give better access and provide a place where they can have



meetings with the developer, contractors, or anything like that," explains Scott Titus, fire chief of the City of North Port Fire Rescue. "We think that will aid with the growth of the community and help develop that area."

Helping streamline development in Wellen Park is a nice bonus to getting the necessary approvals to get homeowners into their homes faster, but the main purpose of the building is in its name: safety. And to accomplish keeping Wellen Park residents safe, the City of North Port has had to look at its response time for emergency calls.

In the early years of development, Sarasota County handled the emergency call volume for the Wellen Park section of North Port through a mutual aid agreement. "It was primarily ranch land, so there was very little impact," Chief Titussays about the previous arrangement. "As development has taken off, so have the emergency calls and the need for the city to have its own up-to-date fire station onsite in Wellen Park," he adds.

North Port's fire department needs the new

SEE ADDITION, A30 ►

"They'll be the primary fire plans reviewer (inspector) serving Wellen Park as it continues to grow, so it will give better access and provide a place where they can have meetings with the developer, contractors, or anything like that."

— Scott Titus, fire chief of the City of North Port Fire Rescue

WANDER WITH WELLEN

Marie Selby Gardens triples in size through Historic Spanish Point acquisition

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

One of the best ways to be active and enjoy the Gulf Coast is to visit places that celebrate Florida's natural environment. And right near the vibrant Sarasota downtown is a long-time favorite attraction that is blooming, literally and figuratively.

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens celebrated the 45th anniversary of its official opening this year by purchasing Historic Spanish Point and thereby tripling the size of its botanical landscape to 45 acres.

The original 15-acre downtown Sarasota campus is the only botanical garden in the world dedicated to the display and study of orchids, bromeliads, gesneriads and ferns, epiphytes and tropical plants.

Just 10 miles south, the 30-acre Historic Spanish Point is one of the country's largest preserves open to the public. It showcases native Florida plants, which are set around an ancient shell midden and collection of historic structures.

The Historic Spanish Point purchase wasn't planned, but things moved quickly when that organization approached Selby Gardens in February about partnering.

"They were facing significant financial challenges, and we realized how complementary they were to what we were doing," Jennifer Rominiecki, president and CEO of Selby Gardens, explains. The transaction happened on May 1.

"We're both bayfront sanctuaries, have wonderful local history, were founded by private citizens and offer access to Florida's natural world," Ms. Rominiecki adds.

They differ, she notes, in that the downtown

SEE WELLEN, A36 ►



COURTESY OF MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS
Tropical Conservatory walkway.

Welcome

New Welcome Center takes shape at the heart of Wellen Park.

A4 ►



Fun-loving lifestyles

Hello Neighbor: Christina Shaw.

A12 ►



Wellen Round-Up

Just the way you want and need it.

A14 ►





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ALL WELLEN GOOD

Three home trends gaining momentum

We're using our spaces at homes a little differently in 2020. We're working from home, kids are going to school at home, we're trying to keep them occupied with activities, and we're looking for ways to enjoy our favorite activities, all while social distancing.

As a result, home builders and designers are rethinking the design and use of home spaces. Are there better ways you can be utilizing your space and how can you get creative with what you have, both indoors and outdoors? If you're in the process of buying a home, should you start looking for specific things?

We asked award-winning interior design firm Builders Design for their take on the trends they are seeing in home design as a result of the pandemic.

More buyers are seeking homes with more space

The idea of 'less is more' is now a thing of the past. Builders Designs reports that more buyers are now seeking homes with:



a bigger kitchen for more food storage, private home offices, places for kids to get school-work done and allow for playtime, family spaces that allow connected but separate

seating areas, and workout areas to stay healthy while gyms may be closed.

Although homebuyers are seeking more space, open floor-plan options may need to be adjusted for certain homebuyers. If you



are still in the workforce or have children, you may need private spaces to successfully work from home, keep children occupied, quarantine (if necessary) and entertain guests with room to social distance.

The importance of outdoor space

Outdoor space also allows for more human interaction. Outdoor amenity spaces are now including verandas, porches, terraces, french doors onto Juliet balconies, and covered outdoor kitchens for open-air socializing.



Maintaining a germ-reduced environment

In an effort to reduce germs within the home, mudrooms and hygiene stations are being designed for entrance areas and no-contact delivery appliances are being placed near the front door. Ideally these are places to leave shoes, clothing, and other personal belongings upon entry to avoid tracking dirt and germs into the home.

These areas include sanitation wipes and disinfectant sprays; bins for gloves, masks, shoes and other gear worn outside; a place for hand washing or showering; and a place for shopping bags, recycling and mail.

Builders Design recently announced their exclusive

partnership with Houzz, the leading platform for remodeling and design.

Houzz and Builders Design are shaking up the model

home experience by using proprietary technology to offer Houzz-branded models that are shoppable to drive more traffic to our communities.

If you're interested in revamping your space, have any interior-design related questions, or just want to stay up-to-date with news, be sure to check out the Builders Design website.

You can also visit the Wellen Park Facebook page and take a look at our LIVE session hosted in June, which featured Marnee Duffus and Brooke Collins of Builders Design!



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WELCOME HOME

New Welcome Center takes shape at the heart of Wellen Park

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

For the moment, it's a small part of the larger plans for Wellen Park over the next few years. For the moment, the building is just a shell. But come October the Wellen Park Welcome Center will be full. It will have unique art and displays that help to tell the Wellen Park story, interactive presentations to help guide home buyers through their home search journey, and areas for visitors and residents to connect with one another.

The Welcome Center will be the first stop for home buyers looking for their next place to call home, an event location for real estate brokers and builders, and enough amenities and cool touches to make it a hip place to hang out.

"We're extremely excited," says Christine Masney, vice president of marketing for Wellen Park. "Our goal was to create a space that was both welcoming and engaging. Right now, it's empty - but once we get everything in here, it's going to be a really comfortable environment for those who visit."

Ms. Masney outlines goals for the building that sits within the downtown district, not far from the 80-acre lake that will be the focal point of Downtown Wellen.

"We want this to be the first place where everyone stops to learn about our neighborhoods and builders, and about the amenities within our master-planned community," she says. "Many of our home buyers are from outside of the area and this may be the first



WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

The main entrance to the Wellen Park Welcome Center.

time they are visiting Southwest Florida and Wellen Park. They might be from Ohio or New Jersey and currently we don't have a central place for them to learn about the home offerings and amenities. They get off a plane and they drive around visiting each

neighborhood and builder and are left to decipher through everything on their own.

That's a lot of people to talk to and mounds of information to take in at one time. And its proven challenging for some prospective residents.

But despite the challenges, Ms. Masney says, "people love Wellen Park and have chosen to buy their new home here. Our home builder sales teams have done an amazing job

SEE WELCOME, A6 ►

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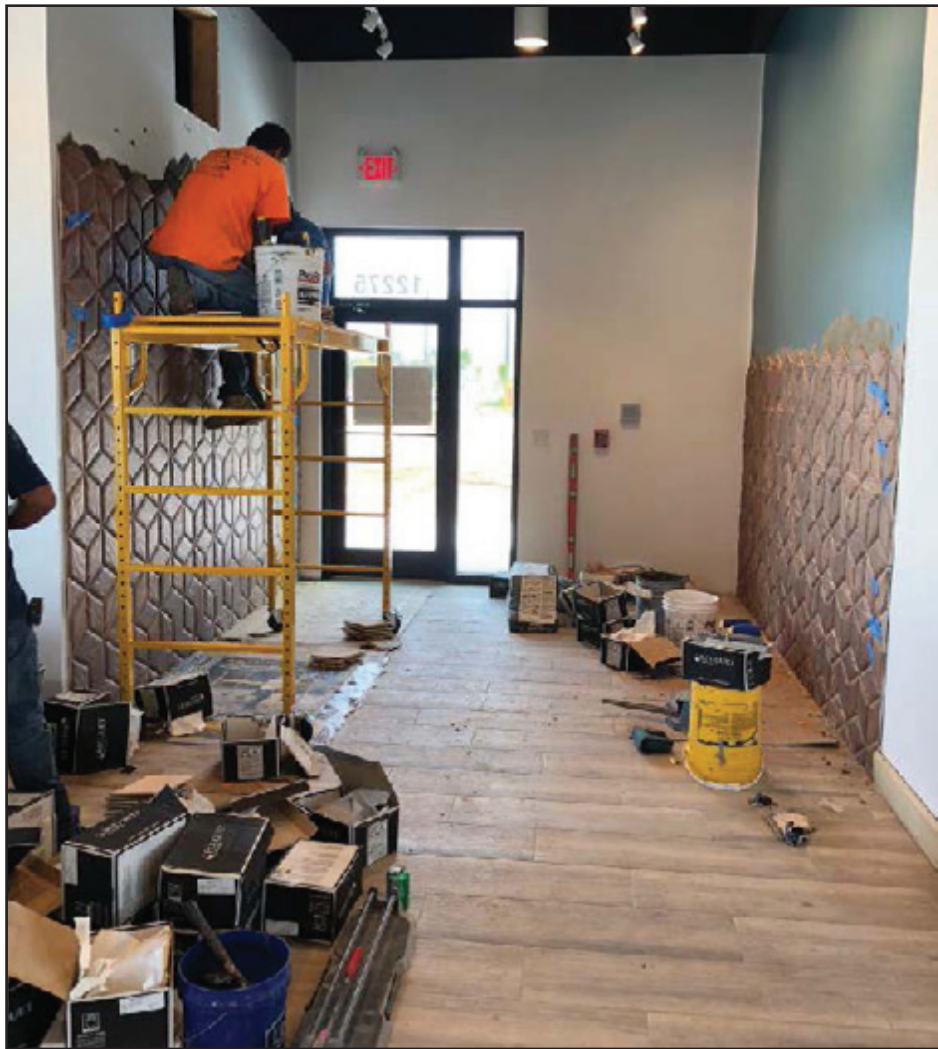
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“We want this to be the first place where everyone stops to learn about our community and our neighborhoods.”

— Christine Masney, vice president of marketing



The Welcome Center is expected to be completed in the fall.

WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

WELCOME

From page 4

of educating prospective home buyers about all things Wellen Park, but we're hoping this new Welcome Center creates an easier process for homebuyers, while also removing some of the education process off the plates of our builder sales teams.”

The Welcome Center will serve as an information clearinghouse for potential buyers and real estate agents, but it also will be

a place for residents and the general public to stop by and grab a cup of coffee, a glass of wine, or a craft beer at the adjoining café, Barrel & Bean that will be operated by OTW Restaurant Group, who also owns Irma's Tacos in the adjacent Marketplace shopping center.

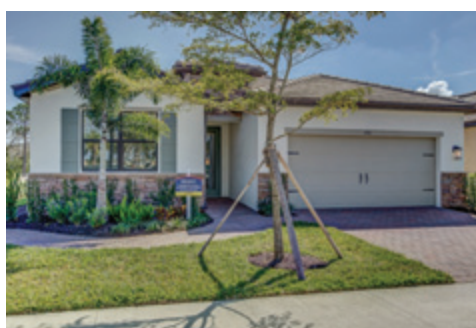
“We want our residents to feel like they can come in and say hi on their morning walk or stop in with friends and family who maybe visiting for the week and who may be interested in moving to Wellen Park as well,” Ms. Masney says.

SEE WELCOME, A28 ►



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Submit your pet pics via email to info@wellenpark.com or via Facebook messenger @wellenparkfl and we'll feature them in an upcoming issue of the **Wellen Park Journal** and on our social channels.

But wait, there's more. Each issue, **Dr. Andrea Daniels** from **West Villages Animal Clinic** will share a pet tip to help you take better care of your furry friends in between visits to the vet.

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WELL VERSED

Meet the merchant: Bocca Lupo Coal-Fired Pizza Restaurant

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

There's just something about growing up in and carrying on a family business that fills some with a very special sense of pride.

Dennis and David Valentino's parents ran a successful Italian restaurant that was like a second home for their sons. The boys worked there for 16 years and ended up taking over the business when their folks retired. The sense of responsibility that goes with that is huge. From the work ethic to the recipes, this restaurant is their family.

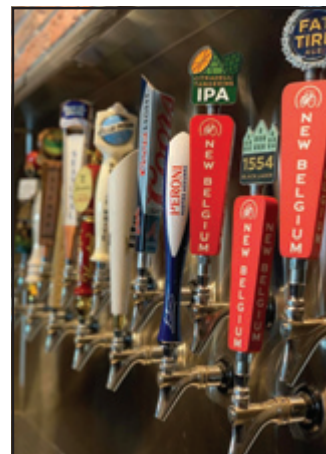
Dennis Valentino proudly told us all about it:

"The Wellen Park location was chosen carefully," he said. "We believe you shouldn't go into a community unless you're needed there ... in fact, I think going in where there's already a similar establishment is kind of arrogant. We learned from the diners at our Port Charlotte locations that many came from Wellen Park, and that's why we came in."

Using family recipes and traditions, the Valentinos believe a family-owned restaurant should strive to make every diner feel like family. That special care and pride goes into the preparation of their food.

"We make New York-style pizza with our dough matured for 24 to 48 hours and baked in a coal-fired oven ... and that makes all the difference," he said. "We also finish our wings in the coal-fired oven after frying them and tossing them in our signature homemade sauces; that gives them that extra crispness and caramelization that makes our wings so special."

The Bocca Lupo menu of course includes the favorites you'd expect at any respected Italian family restaurant — think Baked Ziti, Fettuccini Alfredo and numerous pasta dishes — but



COURTESY PHOTOS

"We make New York-style pizza with our dough matured for 24 to 48 hours and baked in a coal-fired oven ... and that makes all the difference."

— Dennis Valentino, co-owner
Bocca Lupo Coal-Fired
Pizza Restaurant

also has a bit of a twist: a selection of popular submarine sandwiches on homemade rolls — which, again Mr. Valentino said, "I promise you makes all the difference!"

Settled in Wellen Park since April of this year,

little did they know when planning the location's features how well some of their choices would serve them in light of the new challenges facing restaurateurs during this national pandemic.

"We don't do delivery, but for some reason

we just decided to have a pick-up window for take-out in Wellen Park (as they do in the North Port location)," he said. "Maybe it's because we knew Wellen Park is such a pedestrian-friendly community. We had no idea how much demand for this service would develop in a few short months."

Because the Valentino family has always considered their customers to be like extended family, they make a point of giving back to the community.

Tuesday is "Pizzas for a Cause" two-pizza-special night, when a percentage of the evening's profits go to a variety of local charities and causes.

To thank loyal customers for their patronage, Wednesday features half-price specials, and Thursday is always a surprise with the "Facebook Special of the Week" (find it each week on their social media page). Monday is a customer favorite: half-price wings.

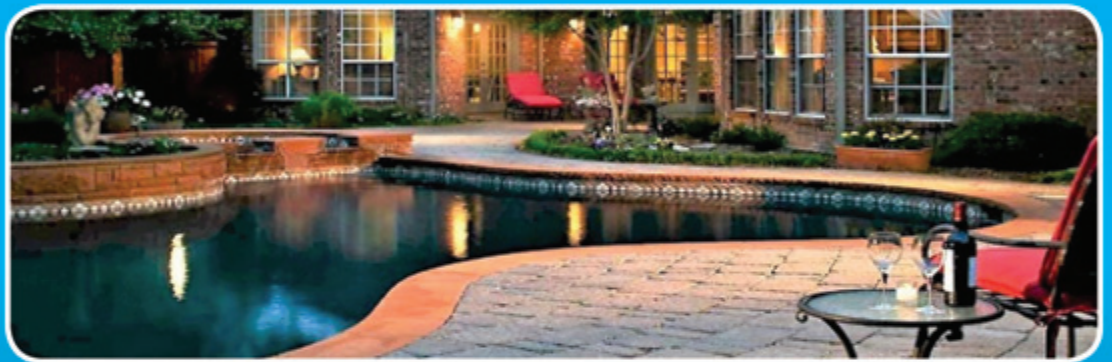
To learn more about Bocca Luca at Wellen Park (and additional Valentino restaurants), like them on Facebook and explore their website at www.boccalupopizza.com.

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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLES

Hello Neighbor: Christina Shaw

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Christina Shaw hit it out of the ballpark when she landed a job with the Atlanta Braves franchise nine years ago.

While a student at Mercer University in Macon, Ga., she had an internship with the Rome Braves. Ms. Shaw enjoyed the work so much that she became the minor league's office manager after graduation in 2011.

A highlight was traveling with the 2016 Rome Braves team — which included stars such as Max Fried, Mike Soroka, Kolby Allard and Austin Riley — as they became the South Atlantic League champs.

When the Braves were getting ready to open CoolToday Park, Ms. Shaw was one of several Rome Braves employees who made the move to Wellen Park in early 2018. The transition included a promotion to senior director of special events and hospitality.

"The Braves organization is top notch," Ms. Shaw says. "I feel very lucky to have been prepared for this role and have stayed with them as long as I have."

She was also excited to begin discovering Florida's Gulf Coast, including the ocean, which she rarely saw growing up 45 minutes west of Atlanta.

"I used to go to Panama City on vacation but had never been to the west coast of Florida," she says. "I love it. This area has so much to do ... It's the right pace of life for me." Christina explored each of Wellen Park's neighborhoods before deciding to buy her home in Renaissance. "The neighborhood felt vibrant and yet welcoming at the same time," Christina noted. "I have met some really amazing neighbors and I abso-

lutely love coming home to my house after a long day at the ballpark."

It's not surprising that someone who has spent her career working for a sports organization would be an athlete herself. Ms. Shaw played high school varsity softball, basketball and golf.

Because she likes to be active outdoors, she enjoys the natural environment and wellness aspects of Wellen Park. "I can run everywhere because there are unlimited trails and parks," she enthuses. "And more are being developed, which excites me."

She especially likes connecting the Wellen Park community with the Braves organization and bringing people together at CoolToday Park.

"It says a lot about this facility that the second person on the ground was someone who was developed for hospitality," she says. "We saw this as being a centerpiece of the community and the events we could host year-round."

Ms. Shaw and her team of 20 full-time employees coordinate more than 100 activities annually such as concerts, car shows, movie nights and Play in the Park Day.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Christina Shaw, senior director of special events and hospitality for the Atlanta Braves, signs a steel beam at the topping ceremony for CoolToday Park.

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She is hopeful that some events scheduled for later this year that allow for social distancing will proceed, including two marathons and the Jingle Jam holiday celebration the first weekend in December. Last year's holiday event featured crafts for kids, live entertainment, a craft show, golf cart parade and photo opportunities with Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

Group tours of the stadium are available, and she hopes to reopen tickets for individuals again soon.

Ms. Shaw encourages people to enjoy the Superior Pools Tomahawk Tiki Bar and Grill, which is open and following health and safety guidelines. The restaurant offers outdoor dining with a refreshing breeze and is a great spot for family and friends to watch sunset or images on the stadium's high-definition big screen.

As she plans events for 2021, Ms. Shaw is rebooking some activities originally planned for this year, such as a celebrity softball tournament. And she is busy fielding requests for facility rentals for weddings, rehearsal dinners, school dances and corporate events.

With Major League Baseball open now, Ms. Shaw also looks forward to welcoming back fans at special events and to the restaurant to cheer on the Braves. 🍌

— *Hello Neighbor* will be a recurring profile in each issue of the *Wellen Park Journal*. Our residents are what makes *Wellen Park* special. We're looking for residents to share why they love being part of our vibrant community; if you'd like to be featured in an upcoming issue, send an email to info@wellenpark.com.

"I have met some really amazing neighbors and I absolutely love coming home to my house after a long day at the ballpark."

— **Christina Shaw**, speaking of her home in Renaissance at Wellen Park



COURTESY PHOTO

Ms. Shaw hanging out with former Atlanta Braves pitcher and Hall of Famer Phil Niekro, right.

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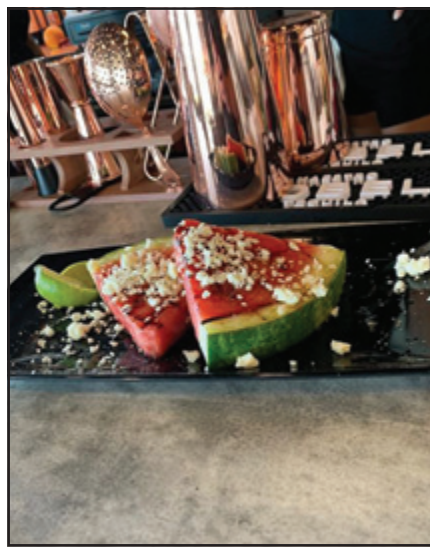
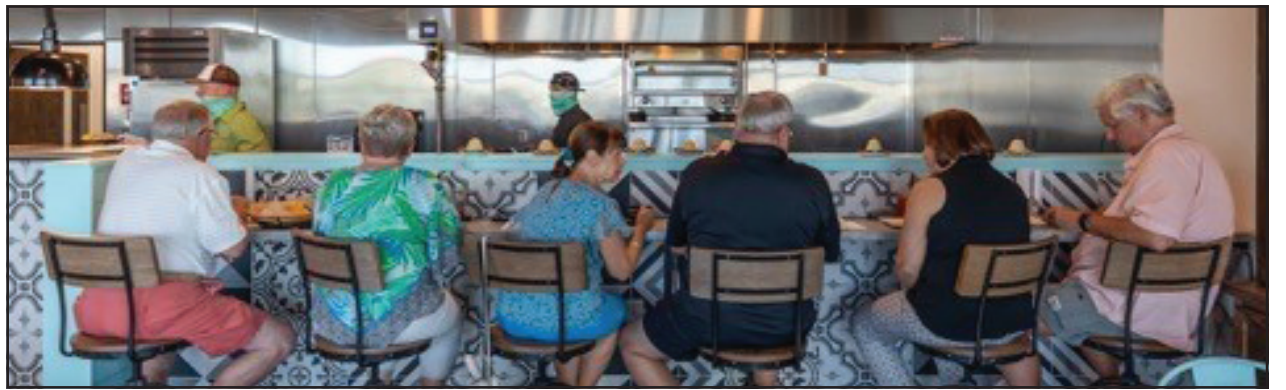
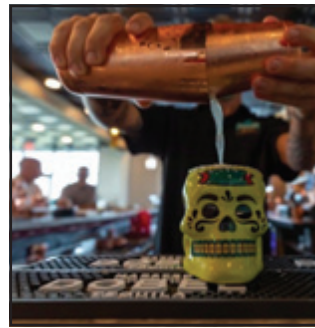
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Show & Tell



COURTESY PHOTOS
Left and far left: Scheduled to open late August, 7-Eleven is moving right along.

Below: Planning your financial future will be a whole lot easier once JPMorgan Chase opens later this year.

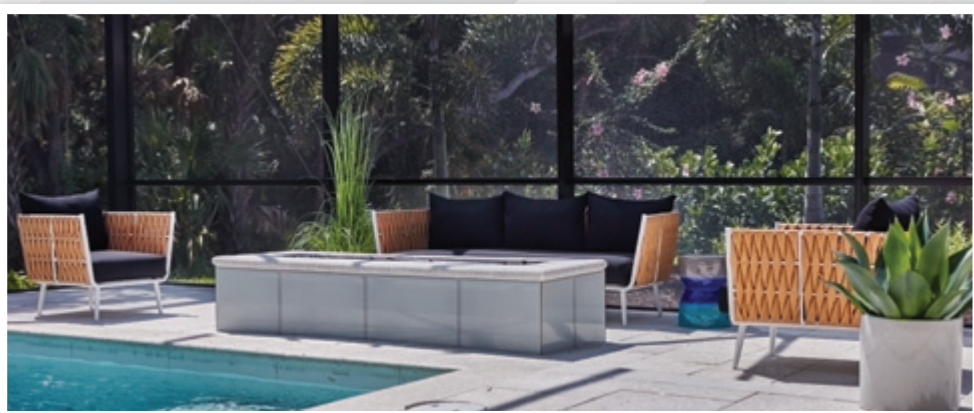


New Wellen Park signage has arrived! Have you spotted any yet? Be sure to take a close look, because the arrows are inspired by the sun in the Wellen Park icon.



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WELLEN PARK BUILDER

Introducing GranPark, a new Playmore District neighborhood

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

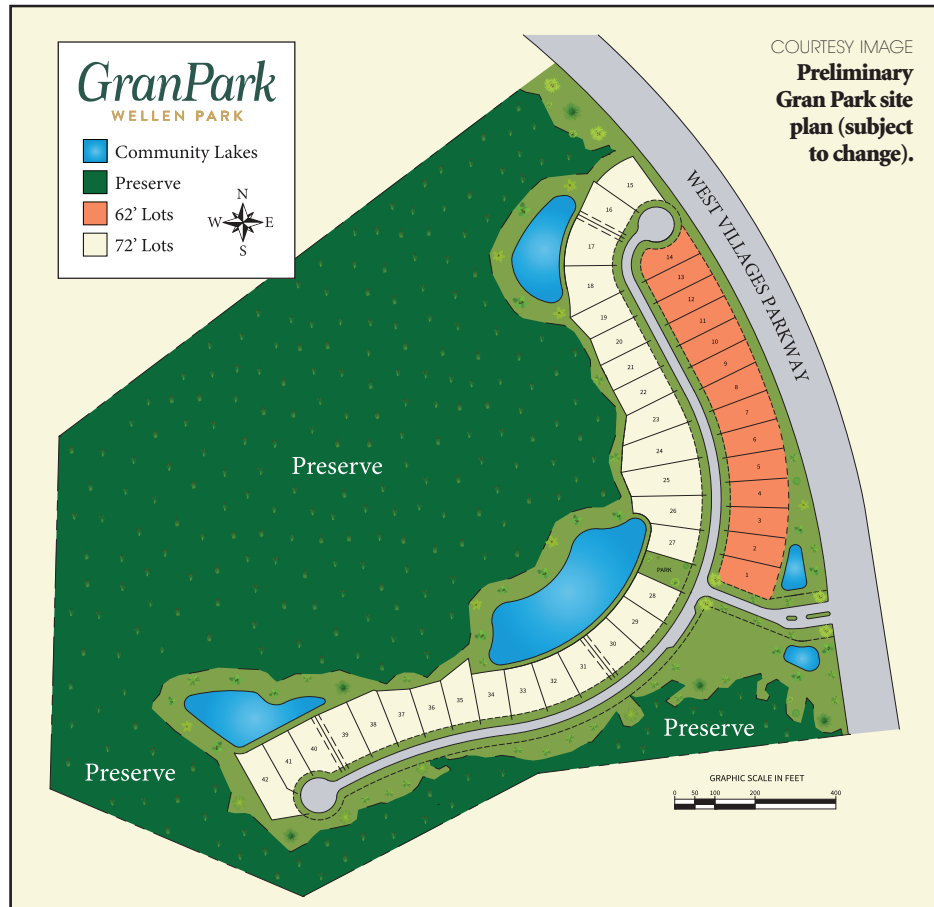
Sam Rodgers Homes, a local Sarasota based home builder is set to build GranPark, the first neighborhood to break ground in the Playmore District, one of three districts that make up Wellen Park.

“We see a tremendous opportunity in Wellen Park,” says Richard Rodgers, vice president of Sam Rodgers Homes. “It’s one of the top-selling communities in the United States, and that gives us a marketing advantage due to the active lifestyle Wellen Park represents,” Mr. Rodgers notes. Wellen Park is the third-fastest-selling master-planned community in the country, according to the real estate consulting firm RCLO. “Our partnership with Wellen Park has been one of mutual respect, so it was a natural for us to continue our relationship and develop GranPark,” adds Mr. Rodgers.

Sam Rodgers Homes was the original developer of Wellen Park’s Gran Paradiso neighborhood before selling to Lennar in 2013. The company has continued to build within the neighborhood over the years, so has always had a presence at Wellen Park.

Sam Rodgers has some impressive credentials as a homebuilder. The Lakewood Ranch-based company has been operating for 50 years and has built more than 5,000 homes in Central and Southeast Florida.

“Our Legacy is one of excellence” Mr. Rodgers says. “We’re very proud of having been in business for 50 years as it represents stability and staying power thru adversity”



Longevity is not Sam Rodgers Homes’ only strong suit. The builder also is able to adapt its home plans to the customer’s personal wants and desires. Many builders offer

options; Sam Rodgers offers the opportunity to help design your own home.

“We’re semi-custom builders,” Mr. Rodgers explains. “We have base plans that can be

modified to the customer’s specific specifications. If you want to make structural changes. We can accommodate you”

Sam Rodgers is planning to break ground on the 63-acre neighborhood by the end of August. Only about 21 acres will be developed for an intimate neighborhood consisting of 42 estate sized lots. The remaining two-thirds of the land will feature nature preserves and wildlife habitats.

A Spring 2021 grand opening is planned, including a model center with four fully decorated homes. GranPark will feature eight exciting new floorplans with three or four bedrooms and three-car garages. Prices will range from \$400,000 to \$1 million with low HOA fees that include a maintenance free lifestyle. All home sites will allow for homeowners to select outdoor living areas including swimming pools should they choose to.

Mr. Rodgers says his company is targeting active-lifestyle buyers who “typically have either recently retired or are planning to in the near future, and who are looking forward to an active way of life.”

He sees GranPark as an “opportunity to be part of an exciting master planned community with homes priced so people can relax and realize the active lifestyle they’ve always wanted.”

GranPark will be within walking distance of Cool Today Park, Spring Training home of the Atlanta Braves, and the Wellen Park Downtown District, offering residents easy access to great eateries, stylish shops and enjoyable entertainment options. 🍷

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SUMMER 2020

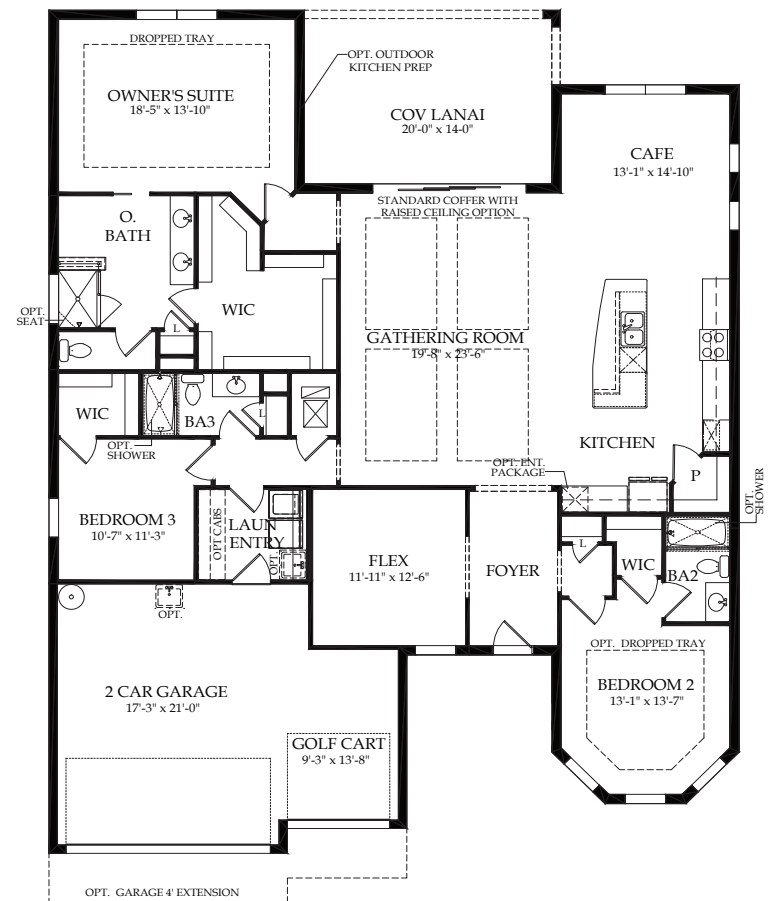
| A19

ISLAND WALK – DIVOSTA



Pinnacle

The Pinnacle is able to accommodate both entertaining and relaxed everyday living. The kitchen opens to the gathering room, dining area, and covered lanai, to suit both formal and informal socializing. And private spaces like the den or owner's suite, with huge walk in closet, let family members still find "me time."



Sales center:
13639 Salinas St., Venice
941-218-2208

Specifications

- Base price: \$421,990
- SF: 2,488 – 3,676
- 3 - 4 Bedrooms

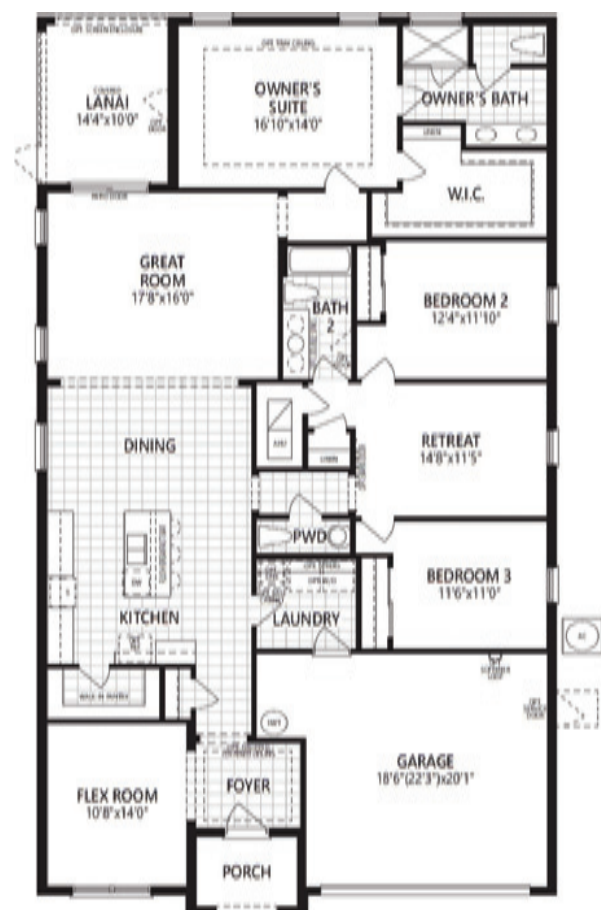
- 3 - 4 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

RENAISSANCE – MATTAMY HOMES



Dominica

The Dominica II is a spacious 2,381 sq. ft., 3 bedroom, 2 bath, 2-car garage single-family home. Flexible living spaces include a flex room and a retreat that will fit your needs as an extra entertaining space for guests, a playroom, or a home office. In this plan, you will find an elegant, timeless kitchen with a large kitchen island that overlooks the dining area and sunny open Great Room. You will love the covered lanai that is perfect to enjoy the sunny, southwest Florida weather.



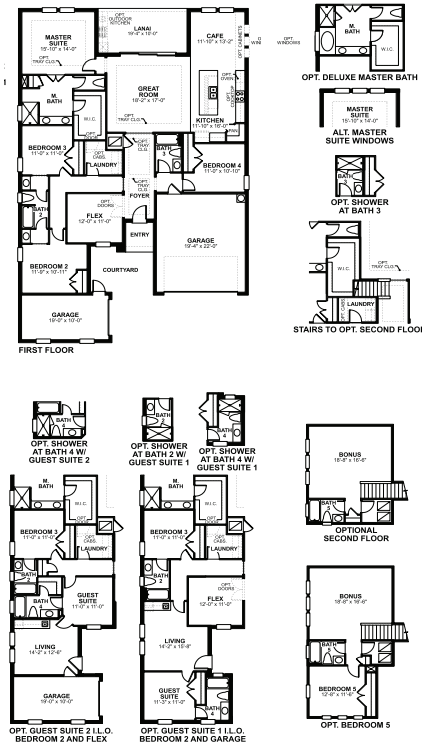
Sales center:
11720 Renaissance Blvd., Venice
941-208-6375

Specifications

- Base price: \$314,990
- SF: 2,381
- 3 Bedrooms

- 2.5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

OASIS – M/I HOMES



Columbia

Welcome to the Columbia. Starting at 2,370 square feet, the Columbia's standard layout includes four bedrooms, three full bathrooms, a flex room and an open-concept kitchen/great room. There's also a three-car garage. This plan is uniquely designed to allow for several structural options, including bonus room and guest suite with living and garage space, making it ideal for the multi-generational family. Personalize your Columbia today. It can become truly what you need.

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

Specifications

- Base price: \$389,990
- SF: 2,370 – 2,973
- 4-5 Bedrooms
- 3-5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family with Multi-Gen Option

SARASOTA M WCI, A LENNAR



Caserta

The versatile Caserta features three bedrooms and two full bathrooms. Designed for flawless entertaining, the island kitchen flows into a large living room with glass sliders to the screened lanai. A second living area is available with dual sinks, standing shower and ample work space. The guest bath are situated at the front.

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

GRAN PARADISO – LENNAR



Orchid

Casual and inviting, this 1,564 square feet of practical living space features 2 bedrooms + den in a desirable split plan perfect for roommates or guests. Owner's suite boasts two large closets and a lavish owner's bath. Large living room extends from master suite for a lovely conversation area. Kitchen opens to a large dinette area sure to become a favorite meeting place. Private study perfect as a media room or hobbyist's hideaway. Large lanai calls for pretty potted plants.

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

Specifications

- Base price: \$244,999
- SF: 1,564
- 2 Bedrooms
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Villa



SECOND FLOOR

Specifications

- Base price: \$236,999
- SF: 1,831
- 3 Bedrooms

NATIONAL –
NEAL COMPANY

GRAND PALM – NEAL COMMUNITIES



Kiawah

The handsome Kiawah four-bedroom home design offers an optional second floor with bonus room or loft, bath and either one or two extra bedrooms. Even without an upper level, this Grand Palm home is spacious. The open main living area includes a great room open to the island kitchen, which features a walk-in pantry, and dining area. In back, an expansive covered lanai can be built with an outdoor kitchen wall if you like. The master suite with optional coffered ceiling in the large master bedroom includes an over-sized walk-in closet and roomy master bath with dual sink vanities, garden tub, large walk-in shower and private water closet. The three remaining bedrooms all feature walk-in closets. Two of these bedrooms share a Jack and Jill bath while the fourth bedroom is convenient to a pool bath. This home also includes a den.

Specifications

- 🏠 Base price: \$454,990
- 🏠 SF: 2,907
- 🛏 3 Bedrooms
- 🚿 3 Bathrooms
- 🏠 Home Type: Single Family

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

ull baths with a 1-car garage and private stairwell.
s seamlessly into a formal dining area and bright, airy
luded owner's bedroom is tucked away at the back of
alk-in closet, while the two additional bedrooms and

BOCA ROYALE – NEAL COMMUNITIES

enice



Sanibel

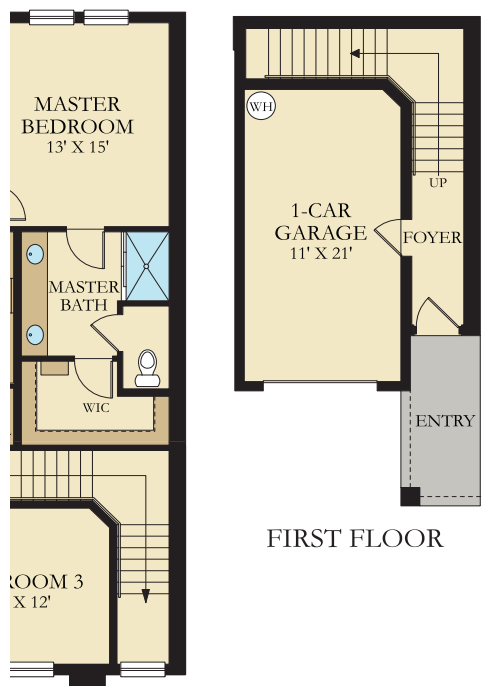
This single-family home features a grandly sized, open living area, full of designer upgrades! The living area features an island kitchen, walk in pantry, breakfast nook, and a family room, with views of the separate dining room. The master suite takes up one side of the home, which includes a large master bedroom with coffered ceiling, two walk in closets, a master bath with two sink vanities, walk in shower, garden tub, and private water closet. There are two additional bedrooms, as well as a den. For the den, there are options to transform that space into a club room or a fourth bedroom in lieu of the den. With the club room option, you also have the option of an extended lanai with an outdoor kitchen wall.

Specifications

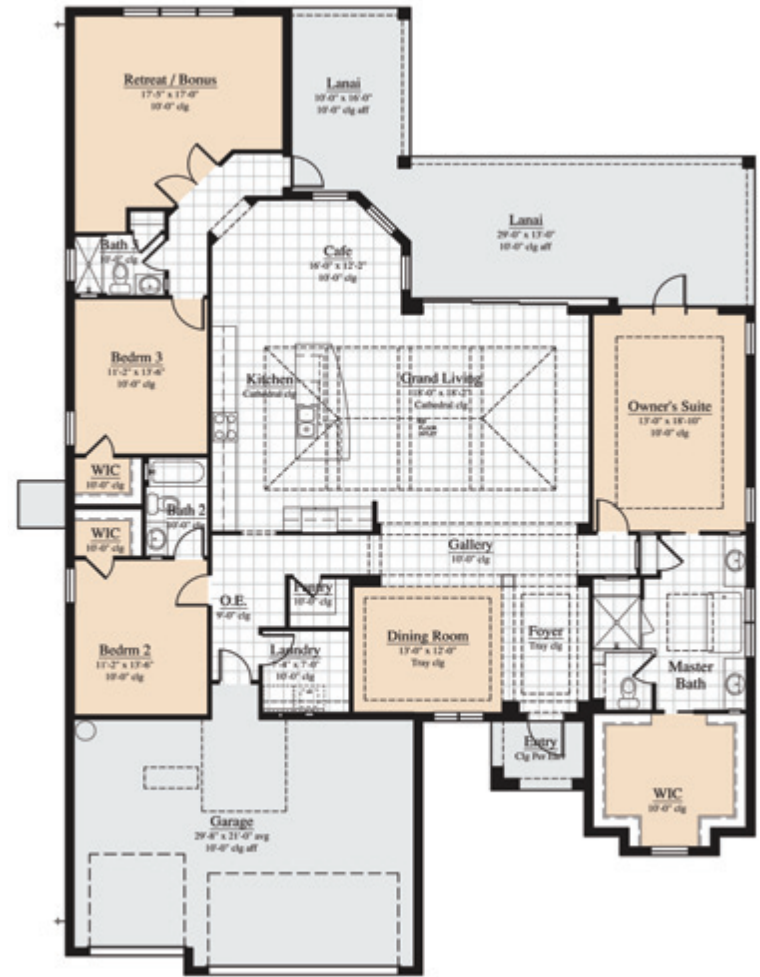
- 🏠 Base price: \$427,990
- 🏠 SF: 2,453
- 🛏 3 Bedrooms
- 🚿 3 Bathrooms
- 🏠 Home Type: Single Family

Sales Center:
1 Golf View Drive, Englewood
941-214-9760

- 🚿 2 Bathrooms
- 🏠 Home Type: 6-plex Condominium



GRAN PARADISO – SAM RODGERS



Napoli

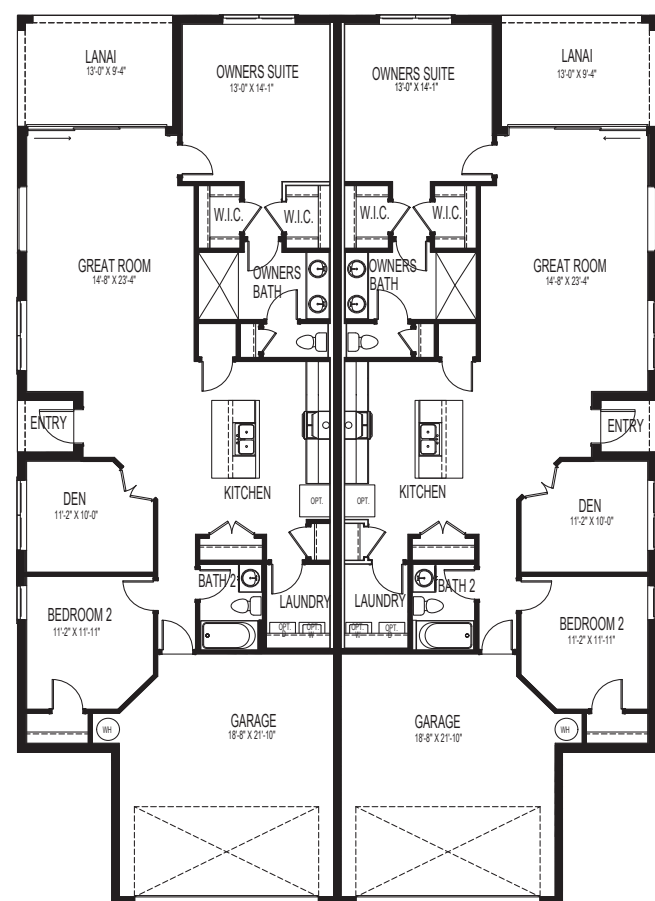
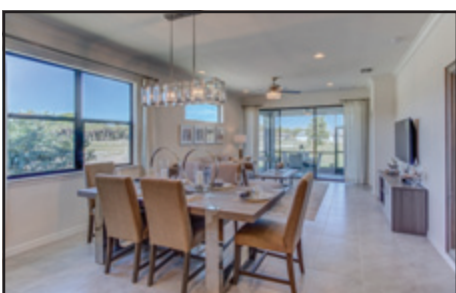
The Napoli's impressive, open grand living area has expansive views of an oversized outdoor living area that includes an island kitchen with lots of storage space and a large casual cafe. You can choose to add the optional fireplace on the lanai to make your outdoor living area perfect for year-round enjoyment. The formal dining room, located next to the foyer, is open to the grand living area for easy kitchen access. The inviting owner's suite stretches across one end of the floor plan and features a nearly 20-by-13-foot dressing room and an elegant master bath with garden tub, double vanities and private water closet. The laundry room and a large pantry abut the private owner's entrance, which conveniently connects directly to the kitchen from the three-car garage.

Sales center:
20107 Passagio Drive, Venice
941-218-2696

Specifications

- Base price: \$498,300
- SF: 2,796
- 3 Bedrooms & Bonus room
- 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

THE PRESERVE – D.R. HORTON



Canterbury

This modernly-designed twin villa home features an open-concept design that feels like a single-family home. Walk-in the front door and you will instantly notice the well-appointed kitchen features a large island perfect for bar-style eating, a pantry, and plenty of counter space. The kitchen is open to the large great room, making entertaining family and friends a breeze. An expansive owner's suite, situated at the back of the home for privacy, includes two walk-in closets and an en suite bathroom with double vanity. The guest bedroom features a walk-in closet and is in close proximity to the second bathroom.

Sales Center:
11961 Blazing Star Drive, Venice
941-246-0154

Specifications

- Base price: from \$234,990
- SF: 1,526
- 2 Bedrooms & Den
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Twin Villa

UPWELL

What's SUP yoga? Quite a bit of fun, actually

BY LAURA TICHY-SMITH

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Imagine a fitness practice that takes you to a place of outer calm to build inner strength. Or is it a practice that grows from an inner calm to build an outer balance and grace? Actually, it's probably a little of both, and it's what happens when you transport yoga out of the studio and cross it with stand-up paddleboarding, called SUP for short.

Nearby at Lido Key off of Sarasota, SUP outfitter SURFit USA has become so well known for its instructor Janice Baxter's SUP yoga classes that it also offers teacher-training certification in the hybrid fitness practice. Although the SUP yoga classes are on temporary hiatus because of the pandemic, SURFit co-owner and founder Aaron Pollard continues to lead twice-daily paddleboarding classes and mangrove tunnel tours.

"SUP yoga offers the opportunity to take yoga to a deeper level by taking it out into nature," Ms. Baxter says. "Nature is where you heal," she adds, "so it's advantageous to take it out of the studio to where we have the outer stimuli of nature, with birds flying, fish jumping, wind on your skin. You get to be a part of it as you breathe deeply."

While nature enhances the breathing and meditative calmness aspects of yoga, the paddleboard enhances the physical strengthening and balance aspects that are also part of the yogic practice. Paddleboarding to and from the class location provides a core muscle strengthening workout because of the balance required to stay upright, and on the board, while paddling. Then the paddleboard moving in the water provides an added dimension of balance to getting in and out



SURFIT USA / COURTESY PHOTO

Kneeling while doing SUP yoga on a stand-up paddleboard is a good place for beginners to start as they get a feel for how the boards move with the water.

of the yoga poses during the class. "It's constant movement and rebalance at the same time, and adding to the senses, so there's a lot more going on out there," Ms. Baxter says. "Just doing the yoga on a

paddleboard is an opportunity to strengthen your core because, even in lying poses, the board is still moving. You need a strong but relaxed core; if your muscles tense, you'll go into the water — but that can be fun as well,

especially on a hot day. Your core ends up working the entire time."

While this might sound as if the classes are only for people who are highly fit and

SEE SUP YOGA, A26 ►

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JUDY SHAUGHNESSY

GRAN PARADISO RESIDENT

Gift Card to Fuji Sushi Hibachi Noodles

“I won a gift card to the new Fuji Sushi Hibachi Noodles I’ll bring my husband Kevin on a date night. I love living in Wellen Park! It’s exciting to be part of the future plans for what’s coming to this beautiful area.”



BOB ASHER

GRAN PARADISO RESIDENT

Pedego Electric Bike

“It was a great surprise to learn I had won a Pedego Electric Bikes bike. I am already enjoying riding it around the neighborhood and through the new Wellen Park community. Thanks again to Wellen Park for this super giveaway.”

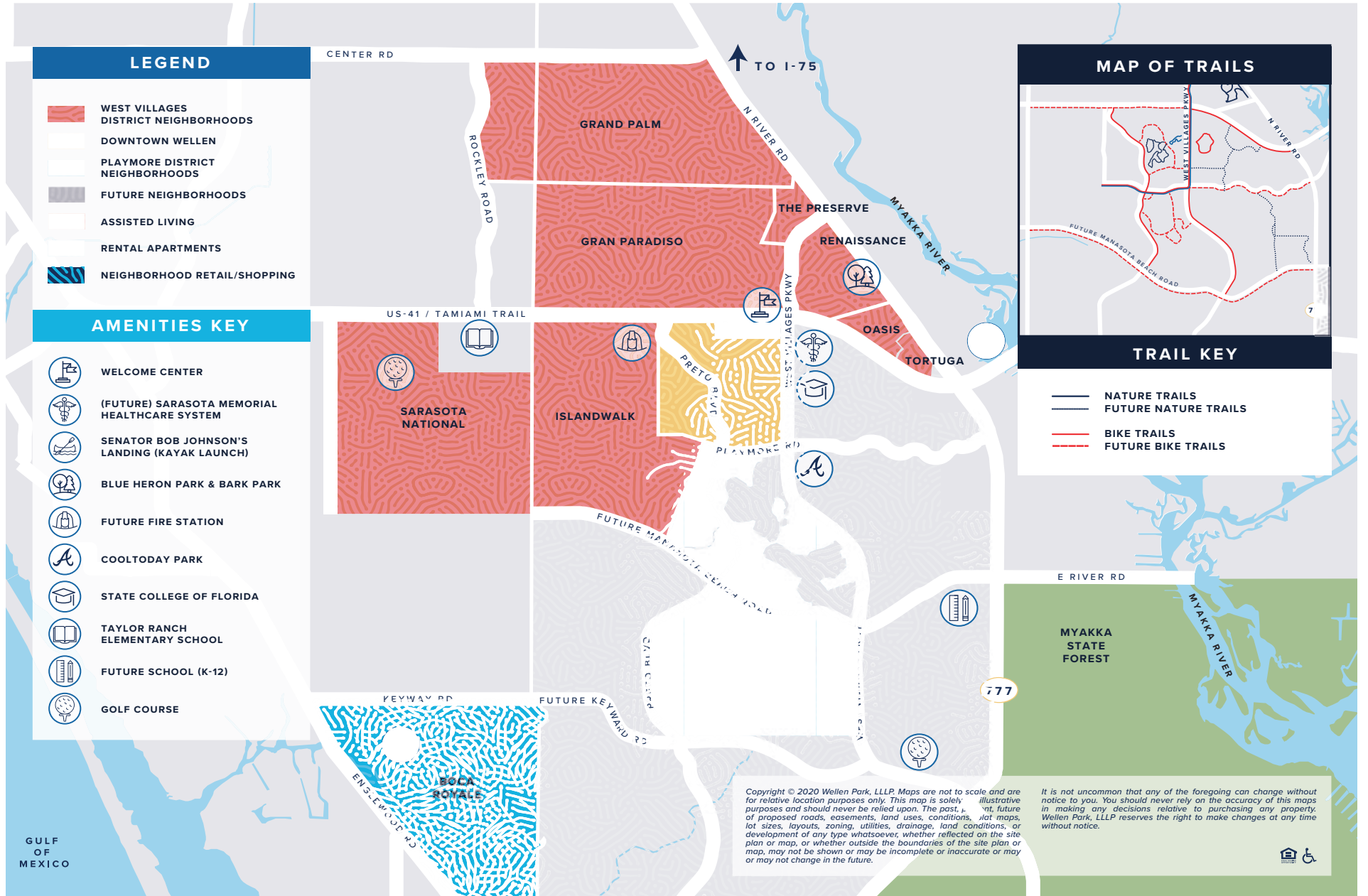


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WELLEN PARK MASTER PLAN MAP



WELLEN PARK NEIGHBORHOODS OVERVIEW

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 Englewood, FL 34223
 941.214.9760

GRAND PALM

Builder: Neal Communities
Discovery Center: 21209 Wacissa Dr.
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.214.9190

GRAN PARADISO

Builders: Lennar & Sam Rodgers
Lennar: 20061 Galleria Blvd.
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.214.9684
Sam Rodgers: 20107 Passagio Dr.
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.218.2696

ISLANDWALK

Builder: DiVosta Homes
Sales Center: 13639 Salinas St.
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.218.2208

OASIS

Builder: M/I Homes
Sales Center: 19806 Bridgetown Loop
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.208.6897

PRESERVE

Builder: D.R. Horton
Sales Center: 11961 Blazing Star Dr.
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.246.0154

RENAISSANCE

Builder: Mattamy Homes
Sales Center: 11720 Renaissance Blvd.
 Venice, FL 34293
 941.208.6375

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Boca Royale	Neal Communities				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gran Paradiso	Lennar	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gran Paradiso	Sam Rodgers				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Grand Palm	Neal Communities				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
IslandWalk	DiVosta Homes				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Oasis	M/I Homes				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Renaissance	Mattamy Homes				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Preserve	D.R. Horton				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sarasota National	WCI, a Lennar Company	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●



SUP YOGA

From page 23

experts at both practices, Ms. Baxter says this isn't necessarily the case.

"People new to paddling may kneel or sit to paddle, like on a kayak, and they probably won't want to do the standing poses," she says. "You don't have to be good at either one to have a good time. You just have to have an adventurous spirit and be willing to learn."

Beyond the challenges of doing yoga poses on an anchored paddleboard that still shifts with the wind, waves and currents, there is also the inspiration of the setting. When in session, the SUP yoga classes take place at Ted Sperling Nature Park on the protected bay shoreline of Lido Key.

"This preserve is an optimal space because it only attracts people interested in nature, such as kayakers and stand-up paddleboarders," Ms. Baxter says.

"The mangrove tunnels are like these magical hobbit lands we go through, and then there are these sweet coves you arrive at through the tunnels. The calm water is the best for doing yoga."

Since it takes a little while to paddle through the tunnels to the protected coves, it provides a nice core workout before and after the yoga class. Ms. Baxter varies the mix of the activities depending upon what the group of people in the class are interested in. Sometimes participants want to get right to the yoga and maximize their time there, while on other days everyone wants to do more of the paddleboarding and watch for manatees among the mangroves. All of these pursuits delight, so Ms. Baxter goes with the flow to guide the attendees of each class through the SUP yoga practice that suits them that day.

During the pandemic pause, she's working



SURFIT USA / COURTESY PHOTO

Above: Core muscles get an additional workout when doing yoga poses on a shifting stand-up paddleboard in a SUP yoga class.

Left: Take the balancing poses of the yoga practice to a new level when you do them on a moving stand-up paddleboard.

Far left: Janice Baxter is the SUP yoga teacher for SURFIT USA.

on a SUP yoga book with SURFit co-owners FIRST NAME Pollard and his wife Karla Gore. The book will cover safety and board selection as well as provide details about how to do the yoga poses on a paddleboard along with ways to modify the poses as needed.

The goal is to publish the book in time for the holiday gift season.

"Practicing yoga on moving water," Ms. Baxter says, "is fun, surprising and a great lesson in laughter and letting go of expectations." 🍀

SURFIT USA

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WELCOME

From page 6

Everything about the design of the Welcome Center is meant to draw people in, make them feel at home, and provide them informational guidance or welcome respite.

For instance, when people walk in the front door they will not see a sales person sitting behind a desk; rather, they will be met with an Ape, a three-wheeled Italian truck, that has been retrofitted to include a reception desk like none other.

"We wanted more of a hospitality-type welcome instead of a sales push," Ms. Masney explains about the entrance. "We went for something fun and imaginative for this area."

The Welcome Center will have its practi-



MASNEY

cal side. The main room and an adjoining presentation room will include interactive touchscreen kiosks that will display neighborhood and regional amenities, retail and entertainment options, home plans, move-in

ready and quick move-in homes - anything and everything about Wellen Park. The presentation screen allows up to 10 different touchpoints so visitors can do side-by-side comparisons to assist in making informed decisions.

Another section of the space will feature an elevated track that will tell the story of Wellen Park's trails and pathways. There are about 18 miles of existing bike paths, walk-



A colorful three-wheeled Italian truck will serve as the reception desk.

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ways and trails in Wellen Park, and plans call for 25 more miles to be added.

Another section of the Welcome Center has been set aside as an artist nook where the developer plans to invite local artists to host short-term exhibits for the public to stop by and enjoy their work and possibly purchase their work. Incorporating local artisans into the space was an important part of embracing the local community into Wellen Parks efforts.

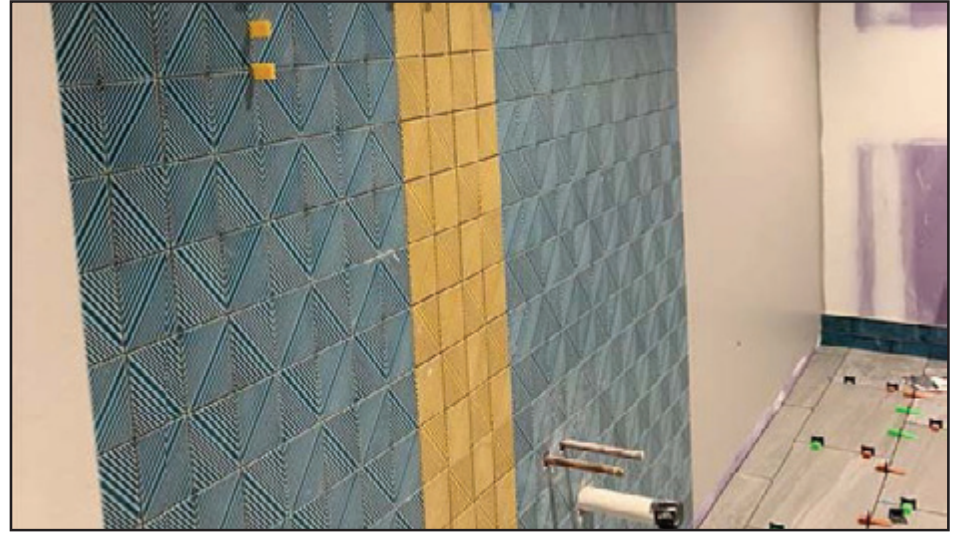
The space will also include two unique art walls. The first will be a community map made of colorful moss that tells the story of the unique Wellen Park landscape. Another will be an 8-by-10-foot one of a kind custom art piece titled "Heartfelt Connections," that tells the story of Wellen Park's heritage tree relocation and preservation program. The artist is Sarasota-based Alexis Fraser, who is

known as "Lipstick Lex" because she plants lipstick kisses on her paintings.

Yet another area will feature overstuffed couches and easy chairs where people can hold conversations (keeping COVID-19 and social-distancing guidelines in mind, of course).

Voices will also be shared at the coffee/wine bar, where prospective buyers will be able to chat with people who already call Wellen Park home. "They'll be able to ask 'Why do you live here?' and have a conversation about it," Ms. Masney says. "That's more authentic than anything a sales or marketing person could ever tell a buyer."

In the end, the Welcome Center will be about community because, as Ms. Masney says, "Comfort and sense of community are really important to the overall feeling of Wellen Park." ♦



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ADDITION

From page 1

station to provide swift emergency services to the growing population of city residents west of the Myakka River and to reduce the load on the county fire station at the State College of Florida campus. To determine needs and timeline, the developer and the city commissioned a study by the respected company Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI).

“We did a study of the area which showed not only what the current needs are for emergency services but what the future anticipated needs would be as that community continues to grow,” Chief Titus says. “We folded that into our strategic plan and have developed that as a strategy to provide coverage not only now but into the future as the incorporated area of Wellen Park continues to grow.”

The ESCI study recommended, as the first station for coverage in the area, an enhanced station be built to serve the community.

The 24,000-square-foot City of North Port Safety Building being built at the corner of Tamiami Trail and Preto Boulevard will house a fire engine, ladder truck, two ambulances and 11 personnel in the four-bay building. The new facility will also help the city uphold its end on mutual aid agreements with the safety services of other municipalities.

Additionally, the city’s new safety building will house a police annex, as well as a fire prevention bureau/plans examiner’s office in the heart of growing Wellen Park.

“They’ll be the primary fire plans reviewer (inspector) serving Wellen Park as it continues to grow, so it will give better access and provide a place where they can have meetings with the developer, contractors, or anything like that,” the chief explains. “We think that will aid with the growth of the community and help



COURTESY RENDERINGS

develop that area.”

Helping streamline development in Wellen Park is a nice bonus to getting the necessary approvals to get homeowners into their homes faster, but the main purpose of the building is in its name: safety. And to accomplish keeping Wellen Park residents safe, the City of North Port has had to look at its response time for emergency calls.

“Any time a community is growing, the demand for emergency services is going to increase over time,” Chief Titus says. “There are standards we strive to uphold which involve a number of things. When ESCI does a study like this, they look at concentric circles of coverage area, travel times, and at a recommended national standard of what response times should be, and that’s what we shoot for.

“It’s somewhere in the four- to eight-minute

range that you want to get services,” he adds. “When you’re stretching to that eight-minute limit, it’s time to get a fire station to that location.”

The City of North Port Fire Department is one of the fewer than 1% in the country that is Insurance Services Office (ISO) 1 rated. This rating is based upon measurement of the community’s water supply, measurement of the fire department itself (in terms of its responses, capabilities, equipment and personnel) and measurement of emergency communications.

“To receive an ISO 1 is a high honor, and it tells the community that we’re providing the highest standard and level of care possible on the fire side,” Chief Titus says. “We have a high standard of performance for our personnel, and it’s not hard to uphold because everybody

here believes in and has a passion for the job.”

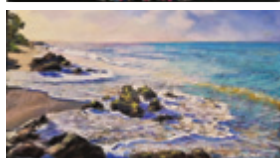
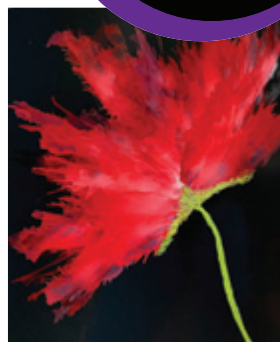
The new safety building will also be a place for the fire department to do public outreach and for people in the community to visit. It will include a 1946 Seagrave fire truck housed within a glassy display room, “evoking the rich history of the fire service and of North Port Fire Rescue; glowing at night like a lantern for the community,” according to a press release from designer Plunkett Raysich Architects of Sarasota. The antique fire truck should transport grandparents back to their own childhoods while they share their fascination with fire trucks with a new generation of kids.

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SEE ADDITION, A34 ►



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FUN LOVING LIFESTYLES

Great food, great service are mainstays at Boca Royale Golf and Country Club

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Ever-changing guidelines for restaurants and businesses can make it difficult these days to keep track of what's going on where. Ian D.N. Fetigan, general manager at Boca Royale Golf and Country Club, gave us an update on the club's revised serving situation, available to members and non-members alike.

"Of course, we're carefully observing all the pandemic guidelines for the safety of our members and guests," Mr. Fetigan told us, "but you'll still find the same great food and service that have always been a hallmark at Boca Royale dining rooms."

Those guidelines include reduced capacity and the suggestion that guests wear masks until they are seated at their own socially distanced table. Reservations are always a good idea and are required for dinner and recommended for lunch plans.

"We're only serving in The 19th Hole right now, and that's the more casual of our three dining rooms. We hate to have to turn people away at the door; with reservations, we can avoid disappointing anyone," Mr. Fetigan explained. "Our limit at this time is 65 diners at a time, and we carefully observe that."

You still have the same great views offered by this elegant club's beautifully landscaped golf course, specifically the 18th green and the 10th tee box. Right now the room is open Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to noon and once a month for a special Sunday



COURTESY PHOTO

brunch. Monday-Friday lunch hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and dinner is served Thursdays from 5-9 p.m. If you'd like to peruse the menu, you can do so at www.bocaroyale.com.

Located outside the gates of the semi-

private club, the team at Boca Royale stands ready to continue its excellent service and exceptional food in a pleasant ambiance for members, guests and the public. It is not known at this time when the other two dining rooms in the main clubhouse (The

Fairway Room and Ginger's Bar and Grill) will be able to reopen, but staff and patrons certainly look forward to that as well.

"Our dining facilities are part of our growing community, and we are pleased to welcome non-members as well," Mr. Fetigan



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“Of course, we’re carefully observing all the pandemic guidelines for the safety of our members and guests, but you’ll still find the same great food and service that have always been a hallmark at Boca Royale dining rooms.”

— Ian D.N. Fetigan, general manager, Boca Royale Golf and Country Club

said. “But again, please remember that due to the imposition of limited capacity guidelines, reservations are required for dinner and strongly suggested for lunch to avoid disappointment. Our passionate team looks forward to serving our great food to as many diners as we’re allowed to accommodate.”

For reservations, call 941-475-6464.

Neal Communities’ Boca Royale Golf and Country Club is at 1601 Englewood Road, Englewood. Check the website for updates on restaurant reopenings and hours. You can also keep up via the club’s Facebook page <https://m.facebook.com/bocaroyale/>.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Boca Royale Golf and Country Club is currently only serving in The 19th Hole and seating is limited to 65 diners. Reservations are required for dinner and recommended for lunch.

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North Port Fire Rescue

- » Responded to 379 alarms in Wellen Park from 1/1/19- 6/23/20
- » 71 residents in Wellen Park took advantage of the Smoke Detector Battery replacement program in the six months leading up to COVID-19.
- » Coordinated training for the IslandWalk and Grand Paradiso CERT Teams.
- » Provided reusable mask giveaways at IslandWalk & Gran Paradiso. Over 2000 masks distributed at each location.
- » Covered events such as the Freedom Festival, stadium unveiling fan fest, nearly a dozen spring training games for the Braves, and a College doubleheader at CoolToday Park this past year.
- » Taught Hands Only CPR/ AED operations to the Braves staff at CoolToday Park.

North Port Police Department

- » Total calls for service in the Wellen Park Area = 3,169 from 1/1/2019 to 7/8/2020.
- » Nearly 1,900 interactions with the public during that time.
- » Average response time for priority 1 calls = 2:21. Overall calls = 7:21
- » Provided security for the Tomahawk 5k, other races and events.
- » Partnered with IslandWalk and Gran Paradiso CERT teams.
- » Members of the police department have attended community meetings; community leadership meetings; presented and conducted community policing classes; attended neighborhood street gatherings; attended district board meetings.
- » Assisted with implementing a Traffic Enforcement Agreement with West Villages Improvement District (WVID).
- » An assigned officer to the West Villages Improvement District 24 hours a day.

ADDITION

From page 30

services every year, so our only way to remain successful and for people to understand the things we do in the community is for us to be able to have other opportunities for interactions," Chief Titus says.

Before the pandemic, the fire department looked forward to people stopping by with their kids to ask questions. They did community safety outreach such as doing smoke detector

inspections and teaching CPR classes. The chief says his department looks forward to doing this type of outreach from the new fire station as soon as it is safe to resume these programs.

"We love what we do," he says. "And we are super excited to have this first fire station in Wellen Park because we want to have that interaction with the community."

Construction on Station 86 will commence in January 2021 with plans for completion in Q1 2022. The \$12.1 million facility will be developer funded with some items being purchased through the West Villages Improvement District.

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— Jennifer Rominiecki, president and CEO, Selby Gardens

WELLEN

From page 1

campus has the “world’s best scientifically documented collections of orchids and bromeliads,” while the Historic Spanish Point campus focuses on native Florida plants.

The downtown campus is the most biodiverse of any botanical garden in the world,” Ms. Rominiecki says, adding, “We’re the only botanical garden with this area of focus on air plants of the world.” It features about 5,000 species of plants and became a Smithsonian Affiliate last year.

The Historic Spanish Point addition came amidst the ongoing development of a master plan to enhance the downtown campus. The three-phase plan is projected to take 10 years and cost \$92 million, including \$72 million for construction and \$20 million for endowment and operations. Of \$42.5 million needed to start the first phase, \$35 million has been raised. The lead gift of \$5 million was donated by Drs. Joel and Gail Morrison Morganroth of Sarasota.

“The \$35 million is really from a terrific mix of people who have been involved in the gardens and lived in Sarasota for years and some who are newer to the community,” Ms. Rominiecki says.

Elements of phase one include the Jean Goldstein Welcome Center, the Steinwachs Family Plant Research Center, the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Herbarium and Laboratory and the Nathalie McCulloch Research Library.

The centerpiece will be the Living Energy



Sunken Gardens and Pergola at Selby Gardens Historic Spanish Point campus.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS.

Access Facility (LEAF), a vertical garden and visitor services building with restaurant that will incorporate cutting-edge sustainability innovations. The building will house a storm-water management system and

generate enough energy to power phase one of the master plan, making it the first net-positive energy botanical garden complex in the world.

Ms. Rominiecki says work continues on

moving forward with the plans despite the gardens having temporarily closed in the spring due to the coronavirus. “There could be nothing better for the local economy, especially during this downturn from the pandemic,

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than to get started with the economic impact of our project as soon as possible.” She expects to go before the Planning Board in September and the City Commission in October or November, with hopes of breaking ground by the end of the year.

All of these developments have led to an increase in visitation, in part because Selby Gardens’ 14,000 members are visiting Historic Spanish Point and vice versa as part of combined membership benefits.

As Selby Gardens celebrates its 45th anniversary in several ways this year, Ms. Rominiecki notes her own anniversary as president and CEO.

“Two distinct items drew me to this campus five years ago,” she shares. “First, the sheer

diversity of the orchid collection. It’s truly astounding in its depth and breadth. And, second, the incredible banyan grove with the Moreton Bay fig tree as its focal point. They are stunning trees originally planted by Marie Selby.”

A horticultural team of 10, nearly 80 employees total and about 800 volunteers keep the campuses ready for approximately 230,000 visitors annually, with more than 50 percent of guests coming from outside the state of Florida.

“We are renowned internationally and have become a destination experience,” says Ms. Rominiecki, who was recently appointed to the Visit Florida board of directors. 🌺



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARIE SELBY BOTANICAL GARDENS.

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- » Both campuses are following strict guidelines that include glass partitions in transaction areas, contactless transactions, hand-sanitizer stations and signage that encourages social distancing and hand washing.

Upcoming exhibitions

- » **In Dialogue with Nature**
“Glass in the Gardens”
Through Sept. 20 – Nature-inspired and botanically themed glass work created by Duncan McClellan and his St. Petersburg studio artists, on display and available for purchase.
- » **40th Annual Juried Photographic Exhibition**
“Celebrate Selby Gardens!”
Through Sept. 20 – Photos taken by amateur photographers at either Selby Gardens’ Downtown Sarasota or Historic Spanish Point campuses. Photographers submitted images along five themes: Favorite Selby Gardens Scene; Plant Life at Selby Gardens; Selby Gardens Geometry; Selby Gardens Birds, Bugs & Critters; and Selby Gardens in Black & White.
- » **The 45th Anniversary Orchid Show**
“Women Breaking the Glasshouse Ceiling”
Oct. 10-Nov. 29 – Honoring founder Marie Selby and highlighting the accomplishments of notable women who built on her legacy. Displays will include living orchids in the symbolic colors of the suffragettes in the Tropical Conservatory, orchid treasures from Selby Gardens’ library, rare books and prints by female botanical artists in the Museum of Botany and the Arts, and a display of orchids and roses at Selby House, marking the 100th anniversary of William and Marie Selby’s purchase of the property.



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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLES

Wellen Park resident and photographer Nish Nishihira focuses on teaching (again)

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS
Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Award-winning commercial and fine art photographer Bob “Nish” Nishihira is blessed with an eye for life that sees far beyond his camera lens.

This upbeat Wellen Park resident seems able to keep himself open to anything life throws his way, and to somehow wrangle it into what he needs. An enthusiastic board member for the North Port Art Center, he hopes to begin teaching classes there this fall.

After graduating UCLA’s graphic design program, Mr. Nishihira studied education and was sent to teach a high school level photography class. The high school teacher he worked with immediately recognized his ability and asked if Mr. Nishihira would like to take on one of his classes permanently. Mr. Nishihira accepted and did a great job. Not long after, armed with his certificate to teach grades 7-12, he accepted his first job at a small school in Morro Bay, Calif., with a total enrollment of 900 students.

It was a great job but the 25-year-old Mr. Nishihira grew bored with life in small town, so when an L.A. friend told him about an opportunity to teach high school photography there, he jumped at the chance. When a mid-semester teachers’ strike meant all the new hires were let go, he was able to find a spot at another high school.

By the time he was 30, Mr. Nishihira and his wife, Providence, had three young children who loved swimming and skiing. The



Nish Nishihira looks forward to teaching again and hopes to start soon at the North Port Art Center.

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L.A. smog had gotten so bad it just didn't feel like a good place to raise athletic kids, so the family moved to the mountains.

He liked Carlsbad, where he found himself teaching again, putting in three years of grade 8 English and photography. When his students swept first, second, and third place in the local school photo contest, the sponsor asked them to withdraw because they showed up the senior high students.

The thing Mr. Nishihira is most proud of is the honor he received at his students' graduation ceremony: The valedictorian surprised Mr. Nishihira by dedicating the entire speech to him. He was deeply moved.

He wanted to retire from teaching but of course found he still wanted to have a regular "job." A new friend had started a janitorial service caring for office buildings at night and was doing pretty well with it. He suggested that Mr. Nishihira try it — just print some business cards and cold call on potential clients.

"I figured with my graphic arts degree and all I should be able to come up with a pretty good-looking business card, and I did," he says.

One of the businesses he approached was a graphic design studio. While waiting to speak to the owner he looked around the reception area and liked what he saw. The owner tried to brush him off by saying curtly that they already had a maintenance company, to which Mr. Nishihira responded: "Well, how about my coming to work for you as a photographer?"

It took a couple of weeks, but when the owner finally got around to taking a look at Mr. Nishihira's portfolio, he was astounded by what he saw. He gave him the names of various ad agencies and public relations firms that could probably use his style. And just like that, Mr. Nishihira was in business for himself.

But teaching still called to him. He landed a position at City College of San Francisco (school of Danny Glover and O.J. Simpson), where he felt he had really found his niche. He was on the faculty for 20 years.

"It was so different," he marvels. "The instructors were so dedicated to teaching.



Nobody was just passing time there while writing a book or something. They really cared about teaching."

In August 2019 the Nishihiras moved to Wellen Park (then West Village) and settled into the Renaissance neighborhood. He decided to take advantage of the proximity to the new CoolToday ballpark, Spring Training home of the Atlanta Braves, and — you guessed it — applied for a job there.

As a peanut vendor.

He was told that job was handled by an outside company. Just as when he'd approached the design studio for a janitor's job, he sailed past the rejection and proposed another idea: "How about public address announcer?"

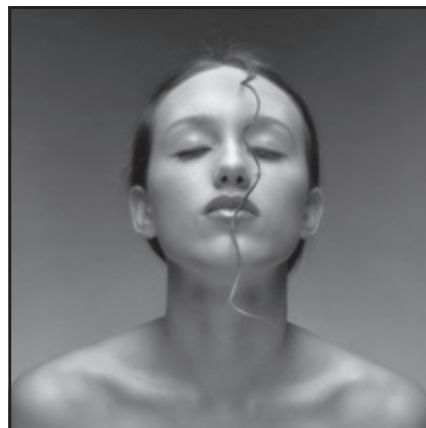
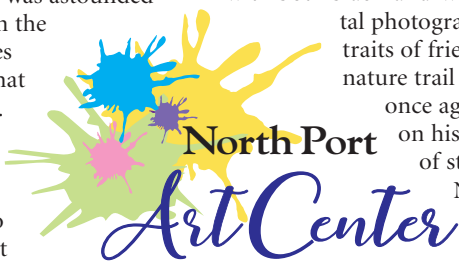
No, that was covered too.

In a final try he came back with: "How about bat boy?" But, he says (slightly mystified), "They just laughed!"

For now, Mr. Nishihira is experimenting with both black-and-white and color digital photography, shooting portraits of friends, plants and the nature trail by his home. And once again he has teaching

on his mind, with hopes of starting soon at the North Port Art Center center. Watch his website, www.

nishihira.format.com, and also watch for him shooting pictures as he explores the nature trails in Wellen Park. When you spot him, be sure to say hello. You and he will both be glad you did. 🍌



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A selection of artwork by Nish Nishihira.

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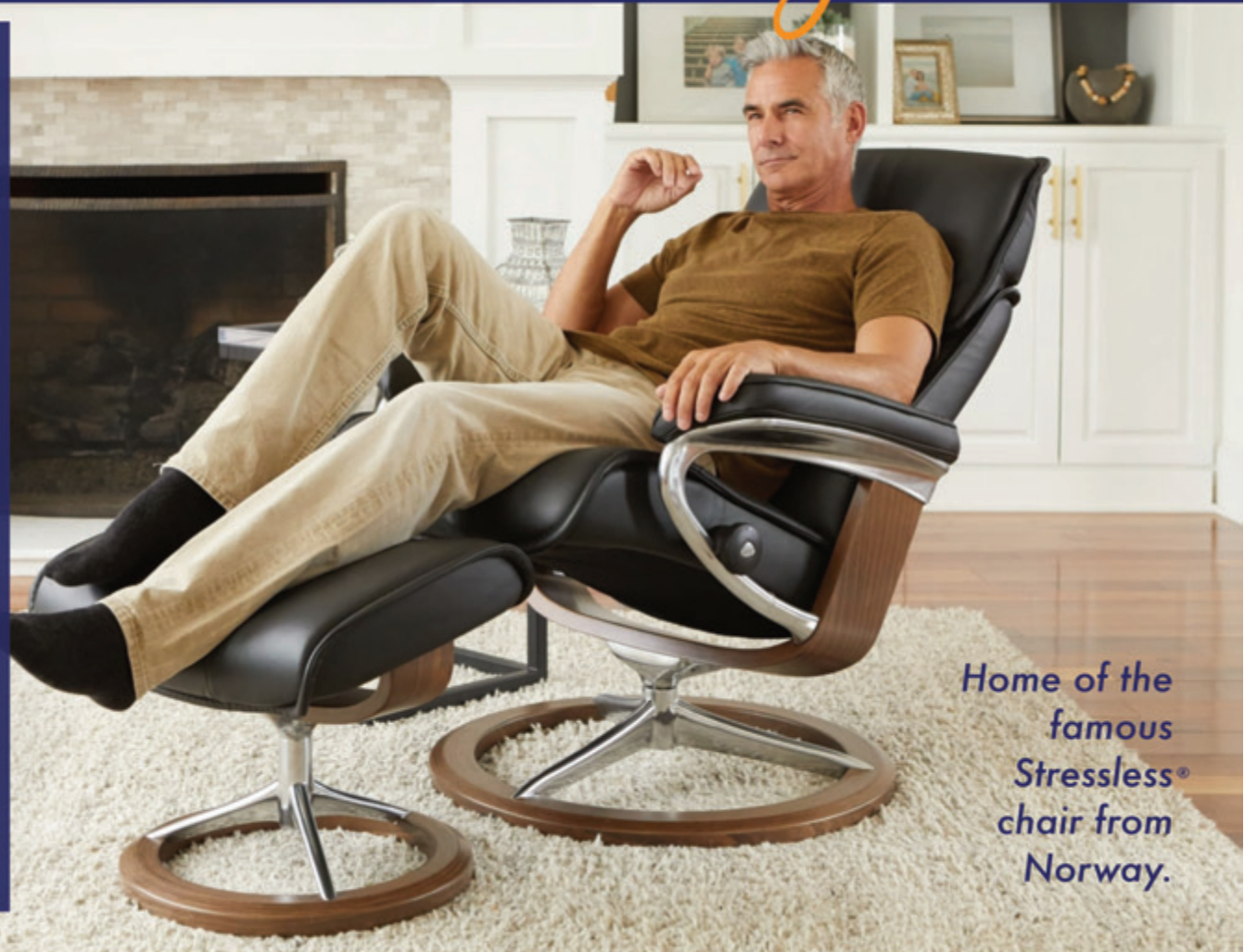
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