

WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

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STEVE LINEBERRY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

“This was the right thing to do both from a conservation point of view as well as creating a sense of place. These trees are beautiful and worth saving, plus they will allow us to create a truly special environment at the entrance to Downtown Wellen and throughout the mixed-use project.”

— **Christine Masney**, vice president of marketing for Wellen Park

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Future Downtown Wellen will feel well established thanks to an investment by developer Wellen Park, LLLP. “The developer is making the investment to relocate 26 heritage trees along the boulevard entrance and throughout the mixed-use development to give Downtown Wellen a sense of maturity.”

“This was the right thing to do both from a conservation point of view as well as creating a sense of place,” says Christine Masney, vice president of marketing for Wellen Park. “These trees are beautiful and worth saving, plus they will allow us to create a truly special environment at the entrance to Downtown Wellen and throughout the mixed-use project.”

The 26 live oak trees vary in size from 14 inches in diameter

SEE TREES , A24 ►

▲
“Twenty-six heritage oak trees, including the one above, are being relocated to areas of Downtown Wellen Park.”

Wellen Park named a top-selling master-planned community

SPECIAL TO WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

Wellen Park is the No. 4 top-selling master-planned community in the U.S. for 2020, according to real estate consulting firms John Burns and RCLCO. Despite the pandemic,

home sales increased 11% from 1,273 in 2019 to 1,415 in 2020, and Wellen Park maintained its 2019 ranking.

“Over the past year, we’ve received tremendous interest from homebuyers who recognize how special Wellen Park is,” says

Rick Severance, president of Wellen Park. “The neighborhood and home options, lifestyle and amenities we offer have all contributed to a record number of home sales, something we expect will continue in 2021.”

Residents already know what a vibrant

community this is. At full buildout, Wellen Park will have more than 60,000 residents and 22,000 homes. Currently, about 8,000 people live here.

Lennar Homes recently opened its Tortuga

SEE TOP, A25 ►

Ride on

Wellen Park residents hit the bike trails. **A4** ►



Around town

North Port breaks ground for new public safety facility at Wellen Park. **A8** ►



Pet tips

From veterinarian Andrea Daniels of West Villages Animal Clinic. **A10** ►



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AROUND TOWN

Downtown Wellen office space available for lease

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Wellen Park residents and visitors who want a short commute to work, a beautiful view from the office and a variety of restaurants for business lunches just outside their front door should consider leasing space on the second floor of the multi-use building in Downtown Wellen.

Interested parties should act quickly, because letters of intent have been signed for more than 40% of the overall 14,000 square feet available.

“The quality of this location and these offices is a great complement to the offerings in this region,” says Rick Severance, Mattamy Homes division president for Wellen Park.



SEVERANCE

The offices are easy to get to and have plenty of accessible free parking. Two tenant spaces will each have a 40-foot octagon-shaped tower that Mr. Severance says will serve “as absolutely beautiful conference room spaces with great views of the grand lawn and lake.”

“Those balconies can also act as box seats to events like our concert series,” he says. “There’s a uniqueness to it that I don’t think this region has anywhere right now.”

Mr. Severance notes that many people have started working from home during the pandemic.

“COVID created an environment where people are working in a different way than they had historically,” he says, adding many people



COURTESY IMAGE

A rendering of the mixed-use building in Downtown Wellen that will include second-story office space for lease.

might not want to travel far once returning to an office. “This space creates an environment so businesses don’t have to travel too far to a downtown office location. The more time you can spend with your family rather than commuting is a good thing.”

The second floor can accommodate up to nine tenants. Mr. Severance says he has seen interest from insurance and financial services businesses as well as companies that operate coworking spaces.

Trapolin Peer Architects out of New Orleans, which designed The Pearl hotel in

Rosemary Beach, designed this building that Mr. Severance describes as comfortable and timeless, incorporating the natural outdoor spaces around it. The architects were mindful of the Florida sun and oriented the buildings to take advantage of shade while also providing beautiful views of both sunrise and sunset.

The offices should be open in the fourth quarter of 2022 or first quarter of 2023. Five-year leases with an option are available. For more information, call the leasing office at 941-999-4822. 📞

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ALL WELLEN GOOD

Wellen Park residents hit the bike trails

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Wellen Park residents have myriad opportunities for year-round outdoor fun. This time of year especially, cyclists can take full advantage of Florida's winter weather and Wellen Park's beautiful vistas combined with great roads and bike paths.

One group of avid cyclists is from the Island Walk community. Although these bicycling buddies have no official hierarchy, Paul Swasey comes through as leader of the pack.

"I bike about 250 miles a week," he says. There likely is no local road he hasn't traveled. Making up the rest of the group are Terry Swasey, Betsy Ledonne, Chris and Doug Cuff, Tony Thompson, Steven and Mary Schmitz and Jack Denert.

"We're neighbors — and friends," Mr. Swasey says.

The retirees are all from different backgrounds and states. "But no one cares what you did in your past life," Mr. Thompson says. "It's all about who you are today."

Bicycling is a fairly new experience for most of them, and they're not just in it for the exercise.

"It's about the camaraderie, too," Mr. Denert says.

They always bike to a planned destination, and it's usually for lunch or brunch. "We like to patronize our local merchants," Mr. Swasey says. They often ride the Legacy Trail and have gone all the way to Sarasota and back. They've enjoyed food and drink gulfside at Caspersen Beach, and they did an evening glow ride just before Christmas, decorating their bikes with lights and other



Above: Paul Swasey, Betsy Ledonne and Terry Swasey. Right: Tony Thompson, Terry Swasey, Jack Denert, Betsy LeDonne, Doug Cuff, Chris Cuff, Paul Swasey, Mary Schmitz and Steven Schmitz.

holiday decorations. An outing to Gasparilla Island meant toting their bikes via car before they could start pedaling.

Although they usually ride for about 30 miles on an outing, they all have season tickets to the Atlanta Braves Spring Training and bike to CoolToday Park, which is only 2 miles from Island Walk, for games. They all look forward to the day when Wellen Park's

additional 25 miles of roads are completed.

Look for the group relaxing after a ride on the patio behind Barrel & Bean next to the new Wellen Park Welcome Center.

We're sure all avid bicyclists will be delighted to learn Wellen Park has ordered bike racks for placement at the Welcome Center/ Barrel & Bean. Installation is expected in late February. 🍷





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AROUND TOWN

Getting to know Wellen Park

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

It was a meeting of mutual benefit back in late January.

The Wellen Park marketing team had the opportunity to highlight the blossoming community — what it offers in the way of housing, schools, playgrounds, recreation and a host of other amenities to local real estate professionals. The desire is to keep the conversation going with as many area real estate professionals who are willing to listen.

About 12 Realtors from Coldwell Banker Central Sarasota — in addition to an undetermined number of Zoom attendees — attended the first session in the new Wellen Park Welcome Center and learned all about the kind of details that can be a big influence on closing a sale.

“It’s our way to introduce the brokers to Wellen Park as well as what we do to help them here,” Christine Masney, Wellen Park’s vice president of marketing, said before the gathering was convened.

A sprawling, 11,000-acre development in southern Sarasota County that ultimately will have 22,000 homes and 70,000 residents, Wellen Park is one of the country’s fastest-growing master-planned communities.

Jennifer Putnam, Coldwell Banker managing broker, and her colleagues appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the community.

“We meet with clients from all over the world,” Ms. Putnam said. “When they come here, they don’t know the territory. Quite often, they shop for properties from just south of Tampa all the way down to Marco Island.”



Elizabeth Andres, above, a Wellen Park Welcome Center ambassador, briefs a group from Coldwell Banker Central Sarasota, left, on the development’s neighborhoods and amenities.

As brokers, she added, it’s their job to know the territory for their clients.

In their presentation, Wellen Park officials described all the reasons to move here and stay put.

“We listen carefully to clients about where they want to be and what they want in their dream home,” Ms. Putnam said. “And for many of them, Wellen Park is a very viable option.”

Wellen Park is divided into districts, includ-

ing West Villages, the future Downtown Wellen district and the Playmore district, which will include the newest residential neighborhoods within Wellen Park.

“We can’t just bring clients to Wellen Park without knowing anything about the development ourselves,” Coldwell Banker’s Jane E. Rees said. “That doesn’t work.”

During her presentation, Ms. Masney told the audience that despite COVID-19, the local real estate market is hot. “When the pandemic first started, we had no idea what our future was going to be,” she said.

She then recited statistics reflecting a double-digit increase in sales in 2020 from 2019.

She went into detail on the various districts and neighborhoods, the plans for downtown, roads, schools — all of it to benefit potential residents who engage a local Realtor to help them find their new home.

Wellen Park is actively reaching out to local brokerage firms to schedule time for sales professionals to attend a Wellen Park overview with the ambassador team. If you’d prefer to reach out and grab a slot for your team, send an email to realtor@wellenpark.com. The team is also working on a few marketing tools they plan to share with real estate professionals within the coming weeks. 🏡

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AROUND TOWN

North Port breaks ground for public safety facility at Wellen Park

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Wellen Park is partnering with the City of North Port to develop a new City of North Port Public Safety Building. The largest city in Sarasota County, North Port provides emergency services through its fire rescue and police departments.

A small groundbreaking ceremony on Feb. 3 marked a big step for both the city and Wellen Park.

“This new building will fulfill a critical need for the growing Wellen Park community,” said Rick Severance, president of Wellen Park. “Our commitment to funding the construction of this building now is to ensure fire, police and other emergency services are readily available for our current and future residents.”

For the city, the ceremony represented the next phase of growth, including enhancing mutual aid agreements with the safety services of other municipalities.

The building site is along Tamiami Trail near the intersection of Preto Boulevard. Construction by Willis Smith Construction is expected to be complete in the second quarter of 2022. Plunkett Raysich Architects designed the building. Engineering work will be completed by Snell Engineering Consultants, AM Engineering Inc., Kimley-Horn and Quest Design Group.

A four-bay, double-deep, 7,000-square foot apparatus room will house rescue vehicles and fire trucks behind bright red metal and glass doors. At the building’s corner, a 1946 Seagrave fire truck will sit within a glass display room, symbolizing the rich history of North Port Fire



PLUNKETT RAYSICH ARCHITECTS, LLP / COURTESY IMAGE

Above: A rendering of the future City of North Port Public Safety Building.

RUSTY PRAY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

Right: Wellen Park executive John Luczynski, far right, takes the lead shovel at the groundbreaking ceremony.



Rescue and glowing at night like a lantern for the community.

The new Station 86 will also provide offices, sleeping quarters and support space for the City of North Port and Sarasota County in this shared facility. A masonry stair tower will serve as a spot where personnel can practice rappelling, ladder and hose training and other simulated conditions.

In addition to the Public Safety Building, the campus will also include a rescue helipad, 1,600-square-foot police garage for support equipment and dedicated parking for police and fire personnel and visitors. A commemorative

Hero Plaza will memorialize and honor the men and women who have served for their dedication and achievements.

At the groundbreaking North Port Mayor Jill Luke noted the importance of the moment. The ceremony, she said, was held to “celebrate this next phase in our city.

“Since I first came to the commission going on four years ago, the city has prepped for a higher quality of service for residents in the most

western portion of our city,” Mayor Luke added. “The desire of our first responders — the police and fire departments — to cover this area and care for these residents has been a high priority for them.”

First envisioned 20 years ago, the 24,000-square-foot facility will house Fire Station 86, a fire engine, ladder truck, two ambulances and 11 personnel. It also will house a police annex for the North Port Police Department.

“This is history in the making,” North Port Police Chief Todd Garrison told the gathering. “It’s long overdue, but we’re very, very, happy to have a footprint here.”

The new station will allow for quicker response by North Port first responders to city residents west of the Myakka River. It is expected to lessen the workload on the current Sarasota County fire station on the campus of State College of Florida.

“We’re going to be ready to serve this community for a long time to come,” North Port Fire Chief Scott Titus said. “We want to be very, very present in the community.” Although only a small percentage of residents ever call 9-1-1, the department does much more to serve the community, he added. “There’s so much more we do on the prevention side, the education side.

“We look forward to continuing to provide exceptional public safety services to the Wellen Park community with a new, state-of-the-art, first-class facility,” the chief said. 🍷



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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLES

ACE classes make learning a lifelong process

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

For more than 40 years, the ACE — Adult & Community Enrichment — program at Suncoast Technical College has provided all sorts of educational experiences for people ages 18 and up. The fee-supported program offered by the Sarasota County School District offers classes on a wide variety of subjects, including art, languages, music, sports, technology, travel, yoga and many more.

Classes take place mornings, afternoons and evenings year-round, as well as on Saturdays during the school year. Some are one-time lectures, while others meet regularly for up to 10-12 weeks.

With between 130 and 150 instructors, ACE is one of the largest of its kind in Florida, according to Galina Jordan, the program's community outreach and marketing specialist. She's always on the lookout for additional teachers and welcomes pitches for new courses.

"Our classes are always full," Ms. Jordan says. "We are in high demand throughout the year." It's no surprise that most of the student body is retired, but with the addition of Saturday and more evening weekday classes, younger people have begun to enroll in greater num-



Above: A proud ACE student shows off her finished piece. Left: ACE students at work on their art projects.



COURTESY PHOTOS

bers, she adds.

The first ACE class ever taught remains one of the program's most popular. Called Classroom on Wheels, it's an exploration of Sarasota and its environs, local history and vibrant arts scene, led since the beginning by Brenda Lee Hickman.

Here's just a sample of other classes on the current schedule:

- In the arts, you can learn blacksmithing

and glass fusing, crochet or sewing, mosaics, picture framing/matting and digital photography and photo editing.

- For a healthy body and mind, you can hone your skills in lawn bowling, golf, pickleball, tennis or swimming. There's a meditation class and another on yoga/Tai Chi/qigong.

- For exploring life and leisure, there's birding, bicycle maintenance, cooking, gar-

dening and boating (offered by the Sarasota Power & Sail Squadron), and even home staging and upholstery.

- One-time lectures are divided into these categories: art and music appreciation, history and political science, philosophy and psychology, religion and spirituality, travel (offered by Robert Gaglio of Italian Culinary Tours) and the Sarasota Financial Forum (sponsored by Walsh & Associates).

- Language classes are offered in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, as well as American Sign Language. There are book discussions and also classes in writing and poetry.

- Numerous technology classes cover everything from the basics about Apple and Android products to social media, WordPress, Microsoft Office and running an eBay business.

In these days of the pandemic, most ACE classes are taking place online via Zoom. Potential participants are encouraged to register for a free Zoom practice session before committing.

In-person classes require precautions including masks, social distancing and hand-sanitizing. Classrooms are sanitized several times a day, and the maximum number of students per class depends on the size of the room. All student tables are placed 6 feet apart.

ACE is a nonprofit and self-sustaining, except for two notable classes: basket weaving for those who are visually impaired and a lipreading class. Because there has been a loss of funding, the school relies on donations to continue these programs, which are always free.

For more information about becoming an ACE student or supporting its programs, call 941-361-6590 or go to www.sarasotacounty-schools.net.



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PET TIPS

From veterinarian
Andrea Daniels of West Villages Animal Clinic
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As the days get longer and the weather more amazing, we are spending more and more time outside with our furry family members. Dr. Andrea alerts us to some **potential springtime hazards** to be mindful of so everyone can enjoy our great outdoors together.

People and pets alike face **more allergies** in the spring months. Dust, pollen and mold are among the most common triggers of seasonal allergies in pets. Even indoor cats can get allergies. Symptoms include excessive scratching, licking, chewing and sometimes sneezing and coughing. If you suspect your pet is having allergies or an allergic reaction, contact your veterinarian to determine the best course of action.



Before you open the window to enjoy a cool spring breeze, check to make sure the **screens are sturdy and installed correctly**. Pets, especially cats, are at risk of jumping or falling through unsecured or broken screens.



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Easter food and décor can be dangerous to pets. With the holiday right around the corner, the Easter baskets left for kids can be dangerous to your furry family members. Chocolate is toxic for dogs, and fake green grass can cause stomach problems if ingested by a curious pet. Lilies are highly toxic to animals, cats especially, so if you think your pet has ingested a flower or flower bulb and is exhibiting symptoms, you should seek veterinary care.



Spring weather in the Sunshine State means **lots of bugs**. While keeping your pets (even cats) on their prescription heartworm, flea and tick medications is important year-round, it's essential during these warmer months when bugs are most prevalent. If you are hiking in the woods or simply strolling in grassy areas these coming months, be sure to check your pet for ticks when you get back home.



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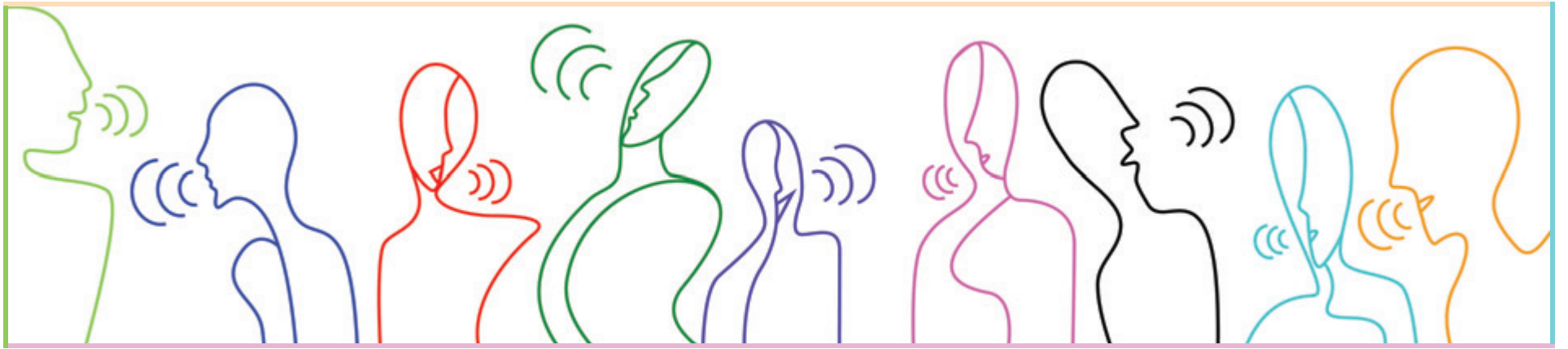
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ALL WELLEN GOOD



Rumor Mill Roundup

OK, neighbors – This is just a friendly reminder that even though you might have read it on social media or heard it over drinks, what you heard might not be totally true. Welcome to Rumor Mill Roundup, our new column addressing various topics we’ve heard around the watercooler and have been asked about most often in the Wellen Park Welcome Center.

■ **The water levels in my neighborhood ponds are low because of the excavation of the 80-acre lake in future Downtown Wellen.**

This is simply untrue, as the lake excavation has nothing to do with neighborhood pond levels. As most of you know, Florida’s weather patterns consist of both wet and dry seasons that cause substantial fluctuations in water levels over the course of the year. It is common for lake levels to stay high during

the rainy season and then recede several feet during the dry season (October-April).

■ **My taxes and/or my WVID assessment are paying for the construction of Downtown Wellen.**

The construction of Downtown Wellen is being solely funded by Wellen Park, LLLP (the developer).

■ **I can drive my standard recreational golf cart on a public road such as West Villages Parkway, Playmore Road and Preto Boulevard.**

In order to drive a “golf cart” on a public roadway with a speed limit of 35 mph or greater, the golf cart must be street-legal

(low speed vehicle) and be registered, titled and insured. LSVs must be equipped with required safety equipment. You can always convert your golf cart to comply with the LSV standards should you choose.

For more information, visit www.flhsmv.gov/lowspeedvehicles.

■ **Manasota Beach Road will eventually take you to S.R. 776.**

Wellen Park, LLLP (the developer) owns approximately ¼ mile of land west of the intersection of Preto Boulevard and Manasota Beach Road and can therefore only extend the road along the area of land they own. The remainder of the land is owned by another developer and the county and we are uncertain of

their plans to make the connection.

■ **Due to the pandemic, Downtown Wellen might open later than expected.**

The development of Downtown Wellen is moving along nicely; however, there have been some modest delays related to the pandemic, including construction material shortages, as well as labor shortages.

The above dynamics have delayed Downtown Wellen by approximately three months, which pushes the opening closer to fourth quarter 2022. Any adjustments will be shared with existing and future residents so you’re always in the loop.

If you have a rumor that you want clarified, please don’t hesitate to send us an email at info@wellenpark.com

Be well! 🍷



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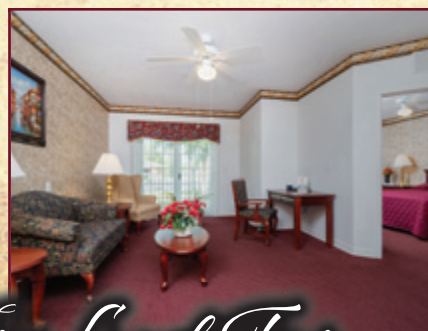
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VILLAS

Villas from the Upper \$200s
2-3 Beds | 2 Baths | 2-Car Garages



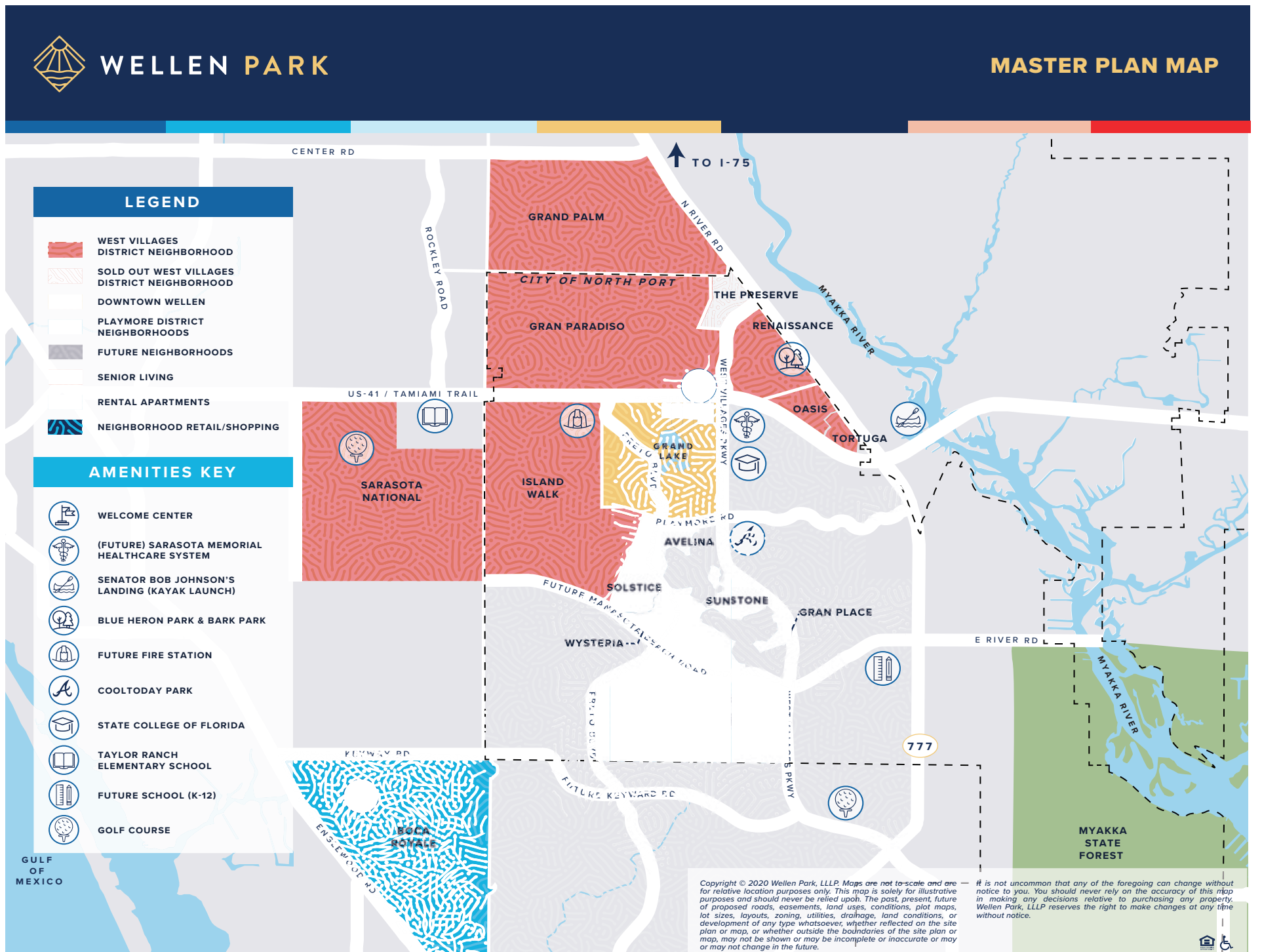
SINGLE FAMILY

11 Home Designs from the Low \$300s to \$600s
2-5 Beds | 2-4.5 Baths | 2- and 3-Car Garages



Prices shown are estimated base prices, do not include lot premiums or options and are subject to change without notice. Photos are for illustrative purposes only, are not intended to be an actual representation of a specific home being offered and depicts a model containing features or designs that may not be available on all homes or that may be available for an additional cost. Community Association fees required. Additional terms, conditions and restrictions apply. Square footage listed is approximate. This material shall not constitute a valid offer in any state where prior registration is required or if void by law. Please see a sales consultant for details. DiVosta® are registered trademarks of PulteGroup, Inc. and/or its affiliates. ©2021 PulteGroup, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. CBC057850. 2/15/21





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Sales Center: 1601 Englewood Rd. Englewood, FL 34223
 941.214.9760

GRAN PARADISO

Builder: Lennar
Sales Center: 20061 Galleria Blvd. Venice, FL 34293
 941.214.9684

OASIS

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

RENAISSANCE

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

GRAND PALM

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

ISLANDWALK

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

TORTUGA

Builder: Lennar
Sales Center: 20061 Galleria Blvd. Venice, FL 34293
 941.214.9684

SARASOTA NATIONAL

Builder: WCI, a Lennar Company
Sales Center: 23114 Copperleaf Dr. Venice, FL 34293
 941.246.0076

NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES

NEIGHBORHOOD	BUILDER	Condos	Town Homes	Coach Homes	Attached Villa	Single-Family	Country Club Onsite Dining	Golf	Lifestyle Directed Activities	Fitness Center	Club House	Card Rooms	Pickleball	Tennis Courts	Bocce	Croquet	Resort Pool	Lap Pool	Spa Services	Trails	Tot Lot	Dog Park	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Golf Cart Friendly
Boca Royale	Neal Communities				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gran Paradiso	Lennar		●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Grand Palm	Neal Communities				●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
IslandWalk	DiVosta Homes				●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Oasis	M/I Homes					●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Renaissance	Mattamy Homes				●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sarasota National	WCI, a Lennar Company	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tortuga	Lennar					●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●



PET PARADE

A CELEBRATION OF WELLEN PARK'S
ADORED AND ADORABLE ANIMAL COMPANIONS



KIMBER

This ever-alert golden retriever mix loves acting as lifeguard when his **IslandWalk** family is enjoying their pool. But sometimes the job is just too much and a good poolside nap is needed!

CASEY & OLLIE

Casey, a green-winged macaw parrot, and Ollie, a blue and gold macaw parrot, live with Louise Elleo in **Gran Paradiso...**



...and yes, they do talk!

LACEY

This friendly **IslandWalk** pup can be seen walking around the community and catching a ride in her owner, John Kuchna's, golf cart. She enjoys chasing squirrels and bunnies and playing with her many toys.



ABBEY

Abbey is a 9-year-old golden retriever who resides in the **Preserve** with George and LeeAnn Tomko. Her favorite pastime is making new friends.

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.

ALL WELLEN GOOD

Senator Bob Johnson's Landing: An exceptional park named for an exceptional man

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Unless you're relatively new to Florida, you're probably familiar with the name Bob Johnson, aka Senator Johnson, who, following serving in the U.S. Air Force and working his way through law school dedicated half a century to working as one of Sarasota's most prominent attorneys.

Sen. Johnson served 16 years in the Florida House of Representatives and Florida Senate, all the while shining as a dedicated civic leader, arts supporter and environmental advocate for Southwest Florida. In 1985, he helped pass legislation designating 34 miles of the Myakka River as the state's only Wild and Scenic River. He even built a cabin on this beautiful, rustic waterway.

Sen. Johnson died at age 80 in 2015.

Sarasota County's 7.1-acre piece of public land that bears his name includes 350 feet of meandering river frontage. This jewel of a county park offers many places of natural beauty and has a variety of features to appeal to any nature lover, but especially to those who, like Sen. Johnson, revered and loved the amazing Myakka River.

Two years of upgrades and renovations were recently completed, promising to make this land an even more popular destination for area residents and nature enthusiasts. With both ample parking and good accessibility for the disabled, Johnson's Landing is the perfect place to put in a canoe or kayak for a restorative getaway on the water. There's also fishing, birding and wildlife viewing,



COURTESY PHOTOS

Senator Bob Johnson's Landing encompasses 7.1 acres of public land in Sarasota County and includes 350 feet of Myakka River frontage.

grills and picnic areas, a rinse station, shelter/pavilion, paved and unpaved trails, and new bathrooms. Because of its location on the river, Johnson's Landing is not one of Sarasota County's many dog-friendly "Paw Parks."

Of course, the park is also immensely appealing to professional and hobby photographers. For a glimpse of what you'll find to photograph, check the park's sites on Facebook and Instagram — or better yet, check it out for yourself.

Senator Bob Johnson's Landing is at 9083 S. Tamiami Trail in Venice. Most Wellen Park neighborhoods are less than 5 miles from the entrance. Park hours are 6 a.m. to sunset every day of the year, and admission is free. 🍷

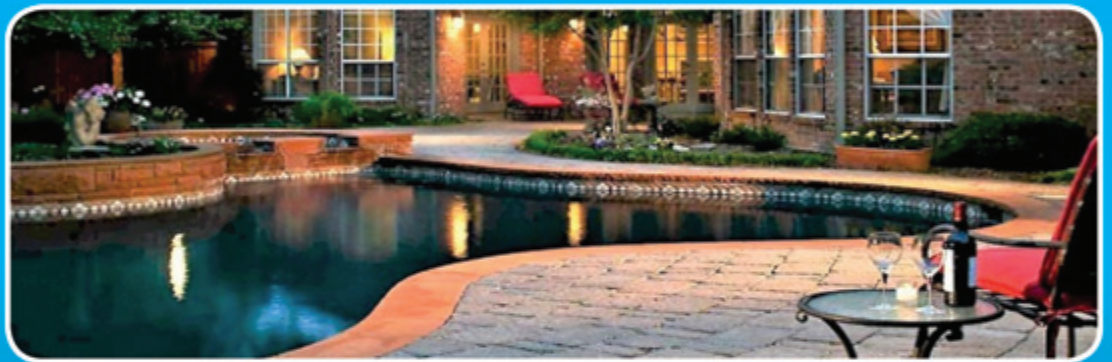


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HOMES AT WELLEN PARK

WINTER 2021

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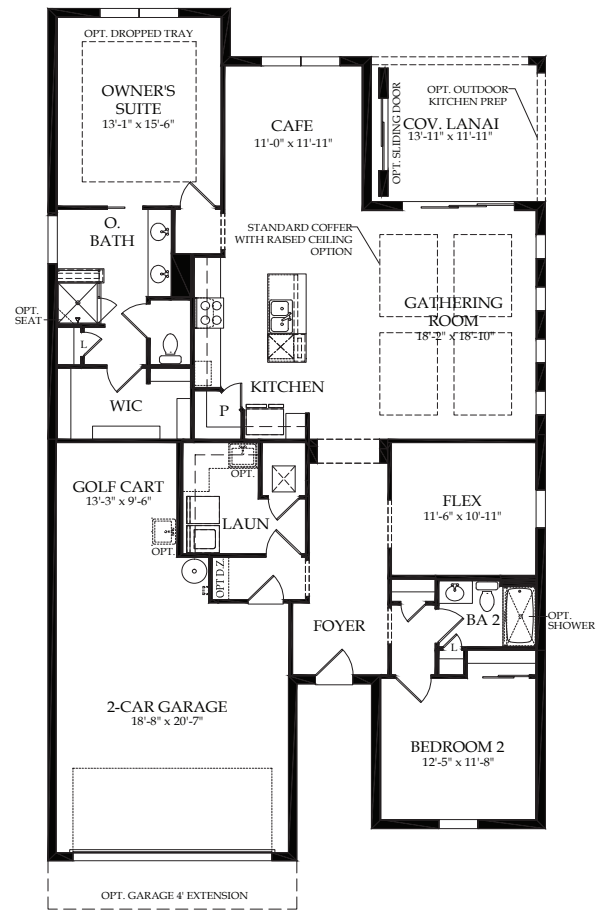
ISLAND WALK – DIVOSTA



Summerwood

Summerwood is a versatile floor plan that offers 2-5 bedrooms, well-suited for families and empty nesters alike. The beautiful one-story home design (with optional upstairs loft) features an open kitchen with center island that overlooks a bright gathering room, perfect for entertaining and everyday living. The 2-car garage includes an expanded area ideal for a golf cart or extra storage.

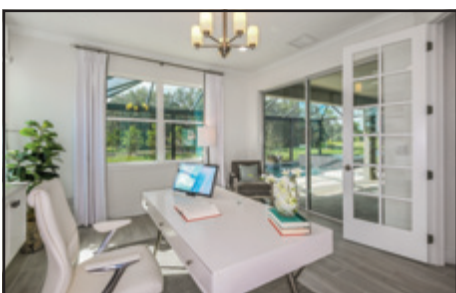
Sales center:
13639 Salinas St., Venice
941-220-0548



Specifications

- Base price: From the upper \$300s
- SF: 1,861 to 3,070
- 2 to 5 Bedrooms
- 2 to 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

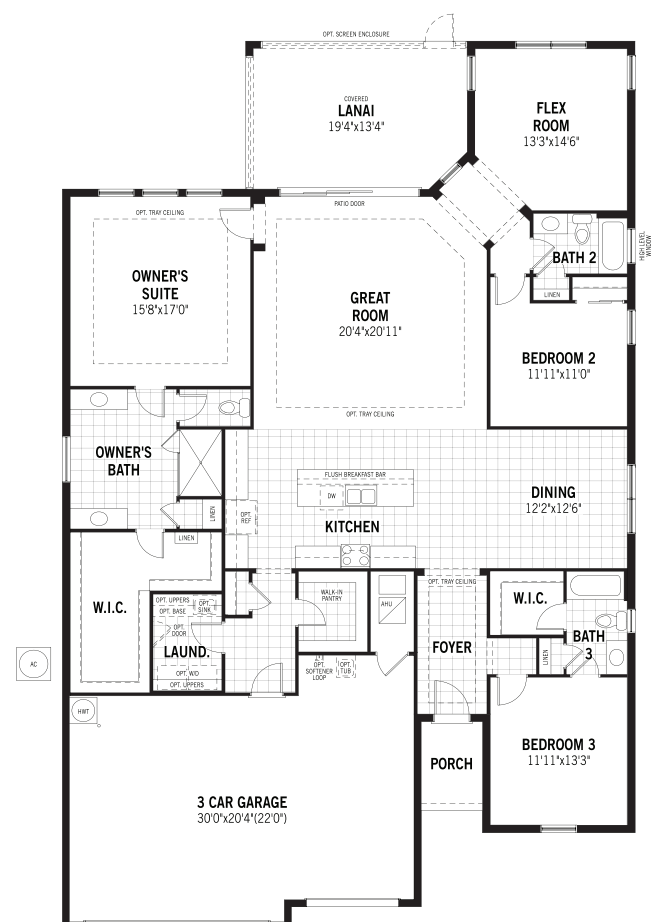
RENAISSANCE – MATTAMY HOMES



Jubilee II

The Jubilee II is a sought-after home design that offers 2,626 square feet of well-appointed living space with 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, a flex room, and a 3-car garage. This open and airy home is perfect for entertaining or everyday living. The chef-inspired kitchen features a spacious walk-in pantry, adjacent formal dining space, and an expansive island with seating. The large lanai is easily accessed through the impressive 12 multi-slide glass door. The owners suite features multiple windows and an owners bath with a large shower, 2 separate raised vanities, and a generous walk-in closet. The 2 additional bedrooms each feature a walk-in closet and bath. A flex room provides a versatile living space.

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



Specifications

- Base price: From the low \$400s
- SF: 2,626
- 3 Bedrooms
- 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single-Family

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

OASIS – M/I HOMES



Holiday

The Holiday is a stately and sophisticated one-story home, with distinct elevation options.. The home's standard layout comes with 3 bedrooms, 3 full bathrooms, a den, planning center, a 3-car garage, and a large covered lanai with an open floorplan.

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



Specifications

- Base price: From \$449,990
- SF: 2,598 – 3,203
- 3-4 Bedrooms
- 3-4 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single-Family

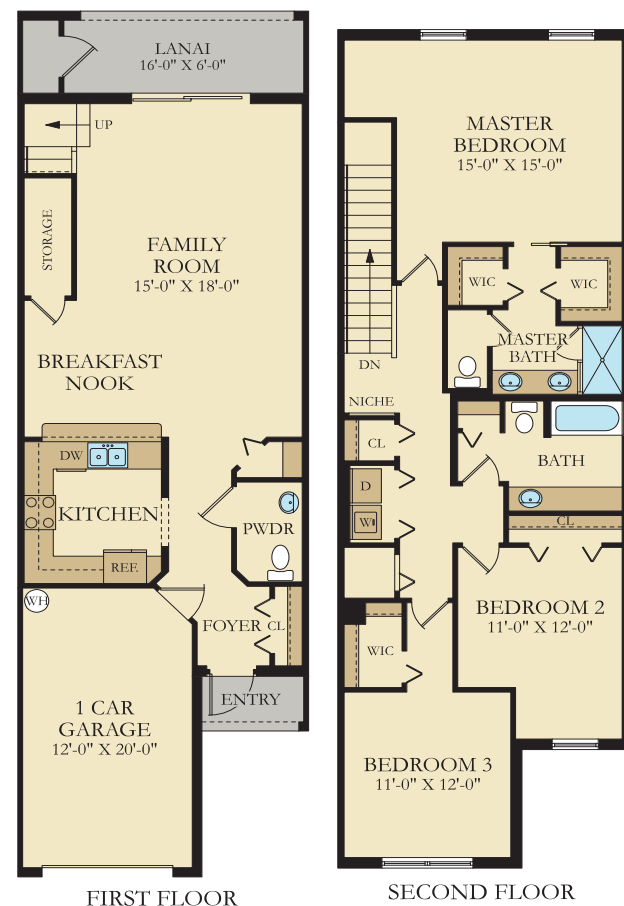
GRAN PARADISO – LENNAR



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 primping 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: \$230,999
- SF: 1,879
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2.5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Townhome

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

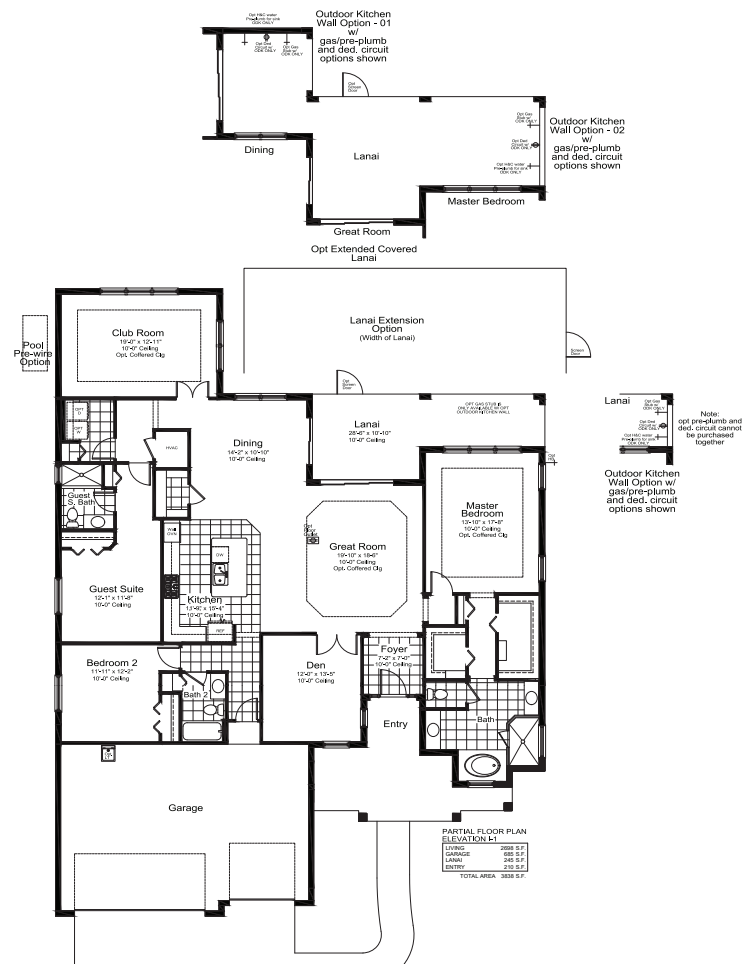
GRAND PALM – NEAL COMMUNITIES



Captiva

Captiva in Grand Palm is designed for entertaining, whether its family or friends. A spacious great room is open to the dining area and kitchen, where snacks and appetizers can be laid out on the island. The kitchen also holds a walk-in pantry to keep staples handy. Nice day or evening outside? Hang out on the covered lanai, which offers the options of adding a covered extension and an outdoor kitchen wall. When it's time for fun and games, head to the club room to play foosball, pool or video games. When you have a stay-over guest, the guest suite with private bath will be appreciated. The other secondary bedroom is also convenient to a bath. At the end of the day, retreat to the spacious master suite, which includes a bedroom with optional coffered ceilings, two walk-in closets and master bath with two sink vanities, garden tub, shower and water closet. The home also features a den.

Sales center:
21209 Wacissa Dr, Venice
941-241-0667



Specifications

- Base price: From the upper \$400s
- SF: 2,698
- 3 Bedrooms
- 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

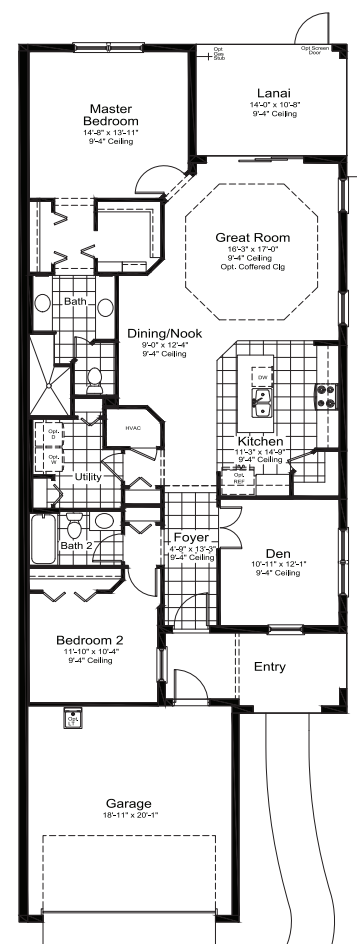
BOCA ROYALE – NEAL COMMUNITIES



Tidewinds

The Tidewinds, a twin villa-style home design by Neal Communities, offers 1,632 square feet of comfortable living space. The open gourmet kitchen, which features an island and walk-in pantry, is open to the dining area and great room with an optional coffered ceiling for an added touch of elegance. A sliding glass door in the great room leads out to the covered lanai. The home also features a den, ideal for a home office. The roomy master suite features two closets including a walk-in, and a dual-sink master bath with walk-in shower and private water closet. The second bedroom is situated at the front of the home next to a full bath.

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



Specifications

- Base price: From the low \$300s
- SF: 1,632
- 2 Bedrooms
- 2 Bathrooms
- Paired Villa

* 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: \$338,999
- 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: \$330,999
- SF: 1,917
- 2 Bedrooms & Den
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

* Prices are subject to change without notice.

WELL-VERSED



COURTESY PHOTO

Nathan Lee addresses the audience at a recent conference of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, Canada. The foundation he runs is headquartered in Wellen Park.

Foundation dedicated to standardizing protocol for 9-1-1 calls

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

It's such a miracle to see someone take a personal tragedy and not only overcome it, but somehow make something good come of it. On Jan. 17, 2008, Denise Amber Lee was abducted in broad daylight, forced to leave her 6-month-old infant and toddler son alone in their North Port home. Two days later she was found dead. That in itself could have been more than enough tragedy to leave her widowed husband, Nathan Lee, angry and unforgiving for a lifetime.

But in due time, there was a different reaction: Her loved ones asked themselves and each other how they could help prevent something like this from ever happening to anyone else. Mrs. Lee's death was shocking enough, but how this happened was beyond belief.

Within hours of the abduction, five calls came in to 9-1-1 about the crime; one of them from the victim herself, who had managed to get her hands on her abductor's cell phone. Heartbreakingly, not one of the calls led to a response that many believe could have saved the young mother's life. Why?

That's what Mr. Lee the widower needed to know. What he found shocked and surprised him: What it all seemed to boil down to was not that anyone in the 9-1-1 centers involved had broken any rules so much as that there simply were no rules.

No set protocol, no consistent procedure for everyone to follow to obtain the best results, nothing that would guarantee that as the urgent calls were transferred from one shift to another and one call center to another, they would be handled in a smooth and sure manner.

Mr. Lee soon discovered this was a nationwide rather than local problem.

By June 2008, the Denise Amber Lee Foundation was created, seeded with \$15,000 of the family's money. The mission: "To promote and support safety through uniform training, standardized protocols, defined measurable outcomes, and technological advances in the 9-1-1 system."

It's been 13 years since the tragedy, and the determination remains as strong as ever. The foundation continues to strive to improve communication in this important part of law enforcement. Because the emergency call center is usually a division of the sheriff's office, budget considerations can affect attempts to

put 9-1-1 training at the top of the list.

The Denise Amber Lee Foundation makes training available to anyone who cares to take advantage of it, around the country. The organization recently established an office in Wellen Park as its base of operations, at 19503 West Villages Parkway.

Mr. Lee usually travels the country talking with interested groups and professional emergency response personnel about the need for standardization of the handling of 9-1-1 calls. The recent pandemic has somewhat limited his in-person sessions, but thanks to technology, webinars have become a vital arm of the effort.

"Training sessions are the foundation's main source of revenue," he says, adding, "We've taught dispatchers in all 50 states. COVID-19 has actually opened doors for dispatchers who wouldn't have access to our seminars otherwise."

Although foundation efforts reach out to the entire country, Mr. Lee especially wants to help the Southwest Florida area that helped him during his family's time of such great need.

"I always want to thank this community for picking me up and carrying me through," he says. "So many people helped so much."

Asked how people can continue to support this important work, Mr. Lee says he hopes that after the pandemic they will be able to resume

live events, at which time they might seek volunteers to help. Right now, however, the public can support the foundation's work with donations via the organization's

website and/or its Facebook page, and by attending the online seminars that are open to the public. Scheduled online opportunities at this time are:

- Feb. 22: Human Trafficking Preparedness for the 9-1-1 Professional
- Feb. 23: A Victim's Plea: Meeting Expectations
- Feb. 26: Hope in the Midst of Chaos: The Las Vegas Shooting Story

You can also donate at no cost to you by simply changing the page where you make your Amazon purchases to www.smile.amazon.com and designating the Denise Amber Lee Foundation to receive a small portion of the profits every time you make a purchase.

One final note from Mr. Lee: "When you get help through 9-1-1, remember to say thank you. You always hear from the dissatisfied person. We don't say thank you enough."

More information is available at www.deniseamberlee.org and on Facebook.



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STEVE LINEBERRY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

Most of the trees in the relocation program are 60-80 years old, and one is close to 90.

TREES

From page 1

to one with a trunk that is 96 inches. Some of the younger trees are about 15 years old, and one is close to 90. Most are 60 to 80 years old.

They are growing on the old Taylor Ranch property, which means they need to be moved anywhere from a quarter-mile to almost a mile.

Eleven will be showcased at the Wellen Park entrance from U.S. 41 and along Preto Boulevard. The others will bring shade and provide color around the stores, restaurants and businesses around Downtown Wellen.

The project, which Ms. Masney calls “a labor of love,” cost \$1 million, which was paid for solely by the developer.

Almost two years ago, Wellen Park engaged the services of Environmental Design, a national leader in tree transplantation, and Kimley-Horn, a nationwide planning, engineering and design firm, to help select the trees.

“It was determined by the team that a major investment in the relocation of mature oaks and trees into the new downtown was something that would really help set Downtown Wellen apart from other new master-planned communities by utilizing the existing vegetation and natural resources on the property,” says Chris Cianfaglione, a landscape architect with Kimley-Horn. “The design of the downtown is organized around those relocated trees as the predominant feature. Every important space is anchored by the relocated trees.”

Once the trees were identified, preparation for their eventual move began.

Staff from Environmental Design dug a trench around each tree, pruned each tree’s root ball to encourage new root growth and then backfilled the trench. The staff have monitored and watered the trees daily to ensure a successful transfer.

“Oak trees can live for hundreds of years,” says Paul Cox, a certified arborist and eastern division vice president for Environmental Design. “Root pruning has a rejuvenating effect on older trees, giving them additional lifespan. The trees will be there way after all of us and our grandchildren aren’t.”

Environmental Design has a patented process for the actual relocation process.

Each root ball will be wrapped with burlap and wire fencing to make it stable. Pipes will be pushed under the root ball in a grid-like fashion, and those platforms will be tied together with proprietary hardware.

The company’s ArborLift system uses a series of inflated pneumatic bladders with extremely low ground-bearing pressure that roll around each other for minimal disturbance to the trees.

“The beauty of this method,” Mr. Cox says, “is that in the past, you had to use gigantic and expensive cranes. It was labor intensive and dangerous to the people involved. This method takes root ball deflection out of the equation, is low to the ground, safer and more cost efficient.”

It’s a slow process, rolling about 100 feet per hour. It takes 10 hours to move 1,000 feet.

Mr. Cox expects to start moving Wellen Park’s trees in March. The effort should take up to 16 weeks.

Wellen Park residents will be able to see photos and a time-lapse video of the tree relocation at www.wellenpark.com and on social media @WellenParkFL.

Mr. Cox says Environmental Design has a 98% success rate in moving trees. His firm will conduct post-transplant maintenance for a year, paying particular attention to soil moisture management.

“Because of the soil condition and forgiving nature of the environment, I suspect that once the irrigation is fine-tuned, we will be on autopilot with oversight,” he says.

The relocated trees will do more than provide beauty and shade for Wellen Park residents.

Mr. Cianfaglione says the mature trees will

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minimize runoff of rainwater and remove thousands of pounds of carbon dioxide from the air annually.

The trees are part the sustainability strategy that Wellen Park is creating around the grand lake, which serves as a stormwater basin and focal point for the downtown.

“We trying to create a more urban setting and be more efficient in the use of the land,” Mr. Cianfaglione says.

Stay tuned to future editions of the Wellen Park Journal to keep abreast of the developer’s extensive sustainability efforts. 🌱



STEVE LINEBERRY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

Wellen Park is bearing the entire cost of about \$1 million for moving the trees to their new homes.

TOP

From page 1

neighborhood to buyers (see story on page 38) after selling out of single-family homes and villas in Gran Paradiso, where only coach homes remain available.

Tortuga is the last neighborhood to break ground in the West Villages district. Designed around a park setting, it will feature a variety of executive homes, each including luxury extras and upgrades at no additional charge. Floorplans range from 1,677 to 3,231 square feet of living space, and prices range from the high \$200,000s to the high \$300,000s.

DR Horton’s Preserve neighborhood sold out in the fourth quarter of 2020, and IslandWalk by DiVosta has entered its last phase of development.

The West Villages district has nine neighborhoods currently selling from DiVosta, Lennar, Mattamy Homes, M/I Homes, Neal Communities, Sam Rodgers and WCI. Options include single-family and attached homes and condominiums. Single-family home floor plans range from 1,350 to nearly 4,000 square feet. Prices start in the low \$200,000s and go into the \$600,000s.

In the new Playmore district, several national builders are under contract for 2,000 homesites among six new neighborhoods, including one neighborhood with a bundled golf course. The builders, including some new to Wellen Park, such as Toll Brothers, will offer a range of options in single-family, villas, townhomes, coach homes and condominiums.

The Wellen Park Welcome Center, a hub for prospective homeowners, visitors and residents alike, was completed late last year and offers areas for people to enjoy and learn more about the community.

“We are here to help people through the buying process,” says Christine Masney, vice president of marketing for Wellen Park. “Our Welcome Center ambassadors are meeting with buyers from all over of the U.S. Their role is to point buyers in the direction of communities that address their needs. The ambassadors also educate visitors on the amenities in Wellen Park and help them better understand our home options and builder partners.

At 12275 Mercado Drive (adjacent to the Publix plaza), the Welcome Center is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Barrel & Bean, the coffee, wine bar and craft beer café next door, is open daily from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

More to come

In 2020, Wellen Park completed a land swap with Sarasota County Schools. In exchange for 60 acres near CoolToday Park, the Spring Training home of the Atlanta Braves, the school district received a 130-acre site suitable to build both a K-8 school and a high school.

Excavation on the 80-acre lake anchoring Downtown Wellen also began in 2020. Plans include shopping, dining, entertainment and other amenities open to residents and visitors alike and feature waterfront experiences, pedestrian-friendly streets and public spaces.

Downtown Wellen’s phase one will include retail shops, waterfront dining and other restaurants, a town hall, a playground and splash pad, a food truck kiosk area and an outfitter equipped with e-bikes, paddle boards and kayaks. A 3-mile health and wellness trail will circle the lake and connect with the existing trail network.

Phase one is expected to open in the fourth quarter of 2022. The 175-acre area will also have an apartment complex, assisted living community and eventually a hotel. 🌟

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AROUND TOWN

The future looks bright for Downtown Wellen

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Wellen Park is attractive not only to homeowners but also to businesses that provide the restaurants, goods, services and activities that make the community such a vibrant and active place to live.

That's good news for residents who own franchises or want to start a local business in downtown Wellen Park.

"Southwest Florida has seen a major surge in growth over the past couple of years," says Scott Dobbins, founder and principal of Hybridge CRE, the exclusive listing agent for retail in Downtown Wellen. That trajectory has increased in the past year, he adds. "People are emptying out of other areas of the country at a greater clip than before pandemic."

Mr. Dobbins believes people are moving to Wellen Park from across the United States for its affordability, outdoor lifestyle and access to beautiful beaches. The influx attracts businesses that benefit not only from built-in customers but also a business-friendly economic climate.

"Governments are working hand-in-hand with businesses that add to their tax rolls and add to the amenities for their communities," he says.

Hybridge CRE has experience in helping with new construction sites. They recently leased businesses in the bottom floor of Hyatt House in downtown Tampa and in the Westchase Town Center, also in Tampa.

"We're retail specialists," says Mr. Dobbins. "We represent many landlords and national retailers."

For Downtown Wellen, part of Hybridge's job was to work with Wellen Park leadership



COURTESY IMAGE

An artist's rendering of the future Downtown Wellen.

on pre-develop initiatives, such as the site plan. They also developed the marketing materials for Downtown Wellen, conducted research for the merchandising plan, identified the top categories of businesses needed to support the residents and created the timeline. They are now reaching out to prospects and fielding inquiries.

"The focus is on a downtown where people live, work and connect within their community," Mr. Dobbins says. "It's a family-friendly lifestyle and gathering place that has amenities for its residents."

Justin Boudreau, principal and director of brokerage services, says Wellen Park's focus on well-being is part of the plan. "This is such an active community," he says. "We put an emphasis on the trail system and how the

neighborhoods will connect to downtown."

Downtown Wellen tenants will reflect this lifestyle, he says, adding the firm is pursuing boutique fitness owners and seeking an outfitter to provide activities such as paddleboarding and kayaking on the lake.

The overall target mix is 40% full-service dining, 8% limited-serving dining, 5% outdoor food, 33% retail and 14% service.

"Dining is the driver in retail right now," Mr. Dobbins says. "It's undergoing some significant changes. We're seeing malls emptying out and retailers going to more pedestrian-friendly locales like Downtown Wellen."

The firm has heard from several established breweries, cafes, coffee shops and full-service restaurants that are interested in leasing space. The goal is to provide a wide variety of culi-

nary experiences.

Mr. Boudreau is in active negotiations with qualified candidates and says he expects the pre-leasing phase to continue until late February/early March when leases will begin to be executed.

Phase one offers a total of 38,010 square feet of retail in two-story mixed-use buildings with retail and restaurants on the ground floor and business office tenants above.

The Canoe House Restaurant will be a 6,000-square-foot casual dining spot with indoor and outdoor seating areas, a separate outdoor bar and sunset views.

The brewpub building will accommodate several tenants and have a second-story, partially covered terrace overlooking the lake.

"There has been strong demand from existing residents who own business or are asking for their family and friends," Mr. Boudreau says. "It's great to have that built-in demand component."

Mr. Dobbins encourages people to act quickly if they want to run a business in Downtown Wellen. "We have a finite amount of space and an abundance of interest," he emphasizes.

The 80-acre lake, which will be a focal point of downtown, is currently being excavated. Mr. Dobbins expects building construction to start in the middle of this year and tenants to move in around the middle of 2022.

Phase two, which will have 27,000 square feet of retail, will be in the northern portion of Downtown Wellen toward U.S. 41. There is no set timeline for phase two.

— For more information about leasing, call Justin Boudreau at 813-413-6704 or send an email to justin@hybridgecre.com.

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

DAILY – Free Yoga with Elin on Venice Beach. Daily at 8 and 9 a.m.; sunset class at 5 p.m. Monday-Thursday. All abilities welcome. 941-408-9642.

Feb. 19-21 – 23rd Annual Music & Motorcycle Festival “Thunder by the Bay” at the Sarasota Fairgrounds with Saturday headliner Molly Hatchet. Proceeds benefit Suncoast Charities for Children. www.thunderbythebay.org or www.visitsarasota.com.

Feb. 26 – Meet photographer Nish Nishihira, North Port Area Art Center member/instructor and Wellen Park resident, at 6 p.m. at the Wellen Park Welcome Center.

Feb. 26 – Your Songs: A Tribute to Sir Elton John 7-9 p.m. at the Venice Community Center, 326 Nokomis Ave. S. Doors open at 6 p.m. Masks required in common areas. www.tickets.sunevents.com

Feb. 27-28 – Siesta Key Craft Festival 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the heart of Siesta Village, 5124 Ocean Blvd., Siesta Key.

Feb. 28 – Vegan Food & Wine Festival 2021 at the Apopka Amphitheater, 3710 Jason Dwellay Parkway, Apopka. Enjoy 30+ vegan food vendors, live music, chill lounge and more. <https://tinyurl.com/yykfd397>

March 1 – Spring Training Braves vs. Nationals at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 3 – Spring Training Braves vs. Cardinals at CoolToday Park, North Port.



CHRIS TILLEY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

Meet the Artist at 6 p.m. March 26 at the Wellen Park Welcome Center. Featured artist Laura Pommier, a member and instructor with the North Port Area Art Center, was commissioned to create the first public mural in North Port for the First 1000 Days Initiative. www.laurapommier.com.

March 4 – Spring Training Braves vs. Red Sox at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 5 – Spring Training Braves vs. Tigers at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 6 – Spring Training Braves vs. Twins at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 6-7 – Naples Pizza Festival starting at noon, with pizza vendors from all over the world. Location TBA on the festival’s Face-

book page.

March 6-7 – 20th Anniversary Downtown Venice Art Classic 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 219 W. Venice Ave. Masks are mandatory inside the show site.

March 11 – Spring Training Braves vs. Twins at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 12 – Spring Training Braves vs. Rays at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 13 – North Port Area Chamber of Commerce Business & Community Expo. Details at www.northportareachamer.com

March 14 – Spring Training Braves vs. Phillies at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 15 – Spring Training Braves vs. Orioles at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 17-18 – Paul Anka in concert at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. www.vanwezel.org

March 18 – Dancing Dream: A Tribute to ABBA, 7 p.m. at the Venice Performing Arts Center. www.veniceperformingartscenter.com

March 18 – Spring Training Braves vs. Yankees at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 19-21 – Country Thunder Kissimmee, with Dierks Bentley, Eric Church, Lonestar, Sawyer Brown and more, at Osceola Heritage Park – 1875 Silver Spur Lane, Kissimmee.

March 20 – Spring Training Braves vs. Orioles at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 21 – Spring Training Braves vs. Rays at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 22 – Spring Training Braves vs. Red Sox at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 24 – Spring Training Braves vs. Pirates at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 25 – Spring Training Braves vs. Blue Jays at CoolToday Park, North Port.

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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLE

EVENTS CALENDAR

March 26 – Meet the Artist at 6 p.m. at the Wellen Park Welcome Center. Featured artist Laura Pommier, a member and instructor with the North Port Area Art Center, was recently commissioned to create the first public mural in North Port for the First 1000 Days Initiative. www.laurapommier.com.

March 26 – The Venice Symphony: “Resound, Resilience” premieres on online on YouTube. Music Director Troy Quinn leads a program of great classical works by Mozart, Vivaldi, Bach and more. This is the final concert in the series sponsored by Gulf Coast Community Center. www.thevenicesymphonyorchestra.org.

March 28 – Spring Training Braves vs. Twins at CoolToday Park, North Port.

March 29 – Spring Training Braves vs. Red Sox at CoolToday Park, North Port.

April 9 – Spring Training Braves vs. Phillies at CoolToday Park.

April 9-11 – Tampa Bay Blues Festival at Vinoy Waterfront Park, 701 Bayshore Drive N.E., St. Petersburg. www.tampabaybluesfest.com

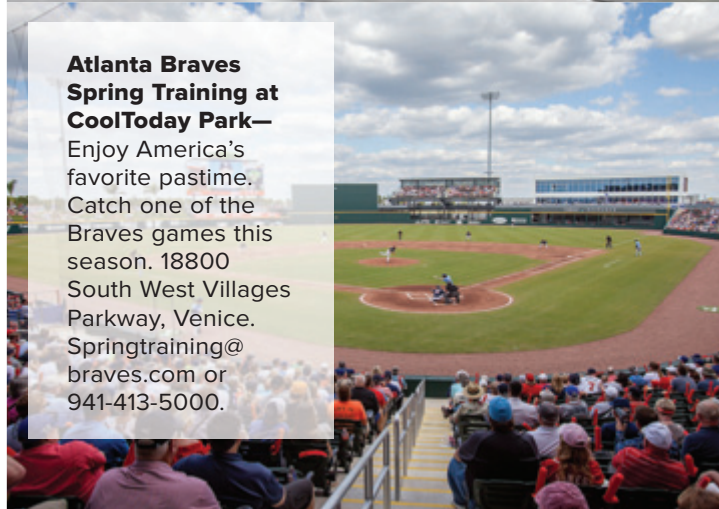
April 12 – Spring Training Braves vs. Miami and 2020 Awards Presentation at CoolToday Park, North Port.

April 14 – Spring Training Braves vs. Miami, Jackie Robinson Day at CoolToday Park, North Port.

April 23-25 – Suncoast Boat Show, “The Gulf Coast’s Premier Boat Show,” at Marina Jack’s, #2 Marina Plaza, Sarasota. Details on Facebook or at www.suncoastboatshow.com.



23rd Annual Music & Motorcycle Festival “Thunder by the Bay” Feb. 19-21 at the Sarasota Fairgrounds with Saturday headliner Molly Hatchet. Proceeds benefit Suncoast Charities for Children. www.thunderbythebay.org or www.visitsarasota.com.



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Suncoast Boat Show, “The Gulf Coast’s Premier Boat Show,” April 23-25 at Marina Jack’s, #2 Marina Plaza, Sarasota. Details on Facebook or at www.suncoastboatshow.com.



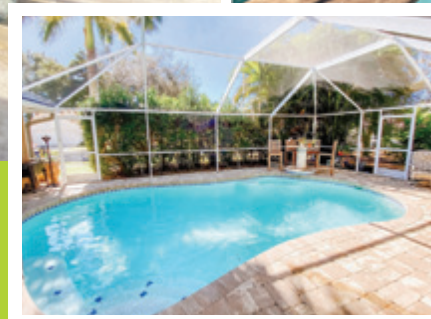
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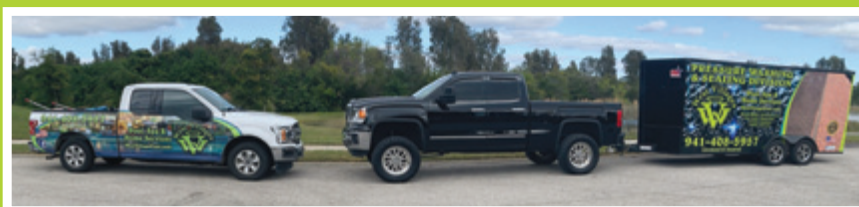


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WANDER WITH WELLEN

Englewood Sports Complex is where the action is

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Whether you like to exercise, shoot some hoops, play or watch softball or pickleball, watch a Little League or soccer game, fish or simply walk among nature — it's all waiting for you at the Englewood Sports Complex. The 136-acre recreation center operated by Sarasota County Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources is right down the road from Wellen Park at 1300 S. River Road. The center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Park hours are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

Although some activities have been curtailed because of the pandemic, recreation coordinator Wendy Aldridge-Dougherty says outdoor sports amenities including eight Little League fields, senior softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, pickleball courts and playgrounds are open. Some classes and scheduled activities are also taking place, although not as many as there were in pre-COVID-19 days.



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■ **Dynamic Walking Fitness** – Instructor Dyan Beyer leads sessions from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. \$5/class or \$4/class with 10-class punch pass.

■ **Boogie Chair** – Instructor Laurentz Cascante leads this exercise class from 9-10 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday. \$5/class.

■ **Hatha Yoga** – Denise Manguse is the instructor for sessions that meet from 9-10



COURTESY PHOTO

It's fun to have a seat and get some exercise in the Boogie Chair class at the Englewood Sports Complex.

a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday. \$5/class. Bring mat or towel.

■ **60+ Men's Basketball** – Games are from 9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, 8:45-10:15 a.m. Monday and 4:30-6 p.m. Wednesday. Call Jim Phillips at 941-408-4500 for more information.

■ **Indoor Pickleball** – Online registration is required in advance to play from 12:30-2 p.m. and 2:30-4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Visit www.scgov.net and search for Englewood Sports Complex.

For outdoor activities, the complex's 12

pickleball courts, four tennis courts and four full-size basketball courts have lights until 10 p.m. from September-May. All are first-come, first-served. Tournaments and clinics are held throughout the year.

There are two adult softball fields (and



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There are seven fishing ponds as well as a playground and picnic shelter. Leashed dogs are welcome along the park's many paths and trails.

Members of the public can reserve a picnic shelter near the playgrounds. There is also indoor rental space that includes two meeting rooms and an 11,000-square-foot multi-purpose/gymnasium. Room rentals for parties and meetings are limited to 49 people or under until further notice. Prior to COVID-19, the center could accommodate events with as many as 100 people.

The fitness room that was available for public use is closed due to the pandemic. It contains weights, state-of-the-art treadmills and other exercise equipment. The locker room with showers is also temporarily closed, as are all water fountains.

The center usually hosts the senior games as well as two craft fairs a year.

In addition to all of the above, All Faiths Food Bank sends its free veggie truck to the complex from 1-2 p.m. on second and fourth Thursdays of each month.

For more information, call 941-861-5000 or visit www.scgov.net and search for Englewood Sports Complex. 🍷



Pickleball goes on under the lights at one of Englewood Sports Complex's 12 courts.

COURTESY PHOTO



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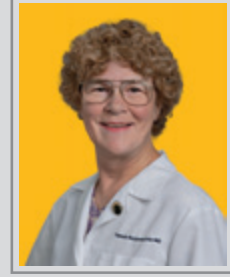
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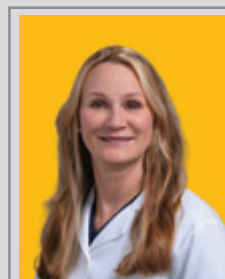
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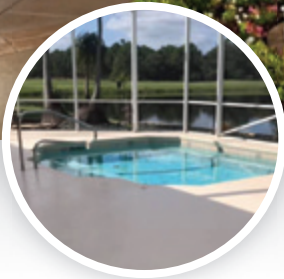
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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLES

Barrel & Bean: Where everybody finds food, drink and fun

BY CINDY PIERCE

Wellen Park Journal Editor

Barrel & Bean is the place to see and be seen around Wellen Park, and owner Tommy Villani knows how to keep it that way. At his friendly café next to the new Welcome Center, he offers more than artisanal breakfast, lunch and happy hour/small plate menus; he offers a full calendar of special events.

Think fun things like Smartphone Trivia Night (come on your own or with a team); Monday and Tuesday fine wine/craft beer pairing dinners with innovative menus by Executive Chef Mike Leopold (these have been selling out at \$40 per person); and Wine-Down Wednesday, Friday Happy Hour and Sunset Social Saturday (all on the patio and with live music by favorite local musicians and delicious small plates from Chef Leopold).

Even if it weren't for all the fun, the café recently debuted a new menu that's drawing Wellen Park residents and visitors alike to partake from morning to night. For breakfast you can Build Your Own Fried Egg Sandwich, tuck into hearty avocado toast or enjoy a bite of quiche or fresh pastry. For lunch you can try one of several sandwiches, including the SRQ National (maple turkey, Vermont cheddar, apple, caramelized onions, arugula and balsamic glaze), the Grand Palm (crab-cake, lettuce, tomato and Old Bay mayo) and the Renaissance (ham, Genoa salami, turkey, roasted peppers, aged Swiss, tomato, arugula



COURTESY PHOTO

Barrel & Bean brings a small town feel to Wellen Park.

and sub dressing).

Beer/wine pairing menus consist of four small plates, each paired with a glass of wine or beer to complement it. A recent menu included chicken and coconut soup with ginger, lime leaves, cilantro and watercress (served with either a Skyway IPA or a glass of pinot grigio) and dry-rubbed port tenderloin medallions with sauteed kale, roasted beets, sweet onions and orange blossom honey cream (paired with a mug of Gatekeeper Porter or a glass of malbec).

Reservations are highly recommended for the pairing dinners and can be made by calling Barrel & Bean at 941-460-8874.

For the latest and greatest information about special events at Barrel & Bean, follow the café on Facebook or Instagram.



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FUN-LOVING LIFESTYLES



Among the special events taking place at Barrel & Bean are twice-weekly pairing dinners that consist of a chef-prepared four-course meal and your choice of four wines or beers. Dinners are at 6:30 p.m. Monday and Tuesday. Cost is \$40. Make your reservation now by calling 941-867-0339.



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SIP & SERVE

Discover Dunkin' in the Marketplace

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

When you want your caffeine strong and your order served fast, head to the new Dunkin' Donuts in the Marketplace.

A Next Gen version of the nationwide chain, the store has two drive-through lanes and the latest technology in beverage systems.

"We are set up to serve food quickly," says Greg O'Neill, managing owner and franchisee. The design includes a mobile lane exclusively for customers who order ahead using the Dunkin' app. "It saves a lot of time," Mr. O'Neill says, adding that the contactless payment is beneficial during these pandemic times. It also includes other benefits. "I urge our guests to get the app to get free perks and rewards."

An enthusiastic franchise owner who has been affiliated with the chain for 12 years, Mr. O'Neill partners on 15 stores in Manatee, Sarasota and Charlotte counties.

He notes that Florida had about 400 Dunkin' Donuts in 2007 and has close to 1,000 now.

"Dunkin' almost has a cult following from New England that spread in Florida," he says. "The products we offer are top notch, and we've really expanded our options."

One of the more novel changes is an eight-tab cold beverage system that keeps all iced coffees and teas chilled rather than hot beverages being poured over ice.

"It's great because your ice isn't melting as you drive away," he says.

There are also healthier menu items, such as the Beyond Sausage Sandwich, the Southwest Veggie Power Sandwich and an Oatmilk



COURTESY PHOTO

The new Dunkin' Donuts in the Marketplace.

Iced Latte. "These are geared toward the healthy lifestyle and vegan guest," he says.

"We incorporated them to meet everybody's needs."

"The response has been really good. We've seen great growth since they rolled out."

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“For years, customers have been saying ‘You need a store in Northport.’ ...when Wellen Park came on the map and developed this plaza, it was a home run.”

— **Greg O’Neill**, managing owner and franchisee

Of course, coffee is a staple, and there are several new offerings.

Two new flavors were launched in January. Dunkin’ Midnight is the brand’s darkest roast ever and features a note of cocoa. Explorer Batch is a medium roast with dark berry notes.

And the Extra Charged Coffee has 20% more caffeine from a green coffee bean extract that Mr. O’Neill says does not change the flavor profile.

Open since September, this new Dunkin’ Donuts fills a need.

“For years, customers have been saying ‘You need a store in Northport.’ We never found the right area,” Mr. O’Neill says. “But when Wellen Park came on the map and developed this plaza, it was a home run.”

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COURTESY PHOTOS

Inside the new Dunkin’ in the Marketplace.



Greg O’Neill, managing owner and franchisee, with store manager Tawnee Jackson.

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AROUND TOWN

Introducing Tortuga, a new Lennar neighborhood



BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

With just 111 homes overlooking a pond and park setting, the new Tortuga community in Wellen Park offers a relaxing and scenic enclave where neighbors will easily get to know one another.

“It is one of our more quaint and quiet communities, and we see a need for that,” says Christina Traver, vice president of marketing for the Southwest Florida division of Lennar Homes. “We have a home and a community for every type of customer.”

Lennar recently broke ground on Tortuga and is offering six floor plans of executive homes. Models start with the three-bedroom, two-bath Capri at 1,677 square feet and range up to the two-story Monte Carlo with five bedrooms, three baths, a three-car garage and 3,231 square feet.

All of the homes feature walk-in closets, dual sinks in the master bath, covered lanais and garages. The Venice model has an island kitchen, and the Trevi boasts a large spa shower.

“The floor plans were purposely chosen to offer a lot of flexible living spaces,” Ms. Traver says. “People’s lives have changed during the pandemic,” she adds, noting that the Monte Carlo’s den would make a great home office space.

Each home comes with Lennar’s “Everything’s Included” package, which features extras and upgrades at no additional charge.

Prices start just under \$300,000. Ms. Traver says HOA fees will be lower than larger communities because Tortuga will not have shared amenities like a community center or

COURTESY PHOTO

The living room of the Marsala model. The three-bedroom, three-bath design is offered in Tortuga, the newest Lennar neighborhood in Wellen Park.

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AROUND TOWN

pool. It will be gated.

The location is close to the new shopping centers and convenient to CoolToday Park, the Atlanta Braves' home for Spring Training.

"Wellen Park is booming, and we see Tortuga as a fantastic opportunity for people," says Jason Harlow, area sales manager for Lennar. "We think we'll see quite a few families as well as seasonal residents."

Tortuga will appeal to people who are focused more on their home and having access to all of the activities that Wellen Park offers, including numerous events at CoolToday Park, miles upon miles of trails and pathways, and new dining and entertainment options coming in fourth quarter 2022 with the addition of Downtown Wellen.

"Some people feel more comfortable with this type of setting rather than a large master community with multiple entrances," Ms. Traver says. "It has more of a close-knit feel." 🍷

— To learn more, call 941-214-9684, visit www.tortuga-lennar.com or stop by Lennar's Welcome Home Center at its Gran Paradiso community, 20061 Galleria Blvd., Venice.



"The floor plans were purposely chosen to offer a lot of flexible living spaces. People's lives have changed during the pandemic."

— **Christina Traver**, vice president of marketing Southwest Florida division of Lennar Homes

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Top: The Marsala has 2,100 square feet of living area. Left: The Amalfi model.

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