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CONSTRUCTION



The Villas at Fiddler's Green: 'Closer to the British style'

'Precisely the right type of development'

The builders tried to determine what fit for Blacksburg and its educated, diverse residents

From a hill just a stone's throw beyond the edge of Blacksburg's historic district—those 16 squares which serve as the nucleus of the thriving, vibrant college town—one can see over the town, through Virginia Tech's stadium towers and across the campus to the Appalachian mountains in the distance.

The Villas at Fiddler's Green and Fiddler's Green are just beginning to take shape on and around this rise.

"The first time I walked the land, I knew it was special. We are using the original 90-lot subdivision plat which has been on record since 1947," says developer Jeanne Stosser, who purchased the 85-acre property in the spring of 2005.

"The lots are 50 feet wide and comply with today's compact building designs. It would have been great to redesign the area into a more creative setting instead of the

block lots, but rezoning in town is historically difficult, if not impossible."

The Fiddler's Green name was in an old deed.

Stosser heard that it is also a former name of a street in the original grid of Blacksburg. The owners were named Black, perhaps part of the original family for whom the town is named.

Not content to throw in a ho-hum, by-right subdivision, Stosser spent several months researching and brainstorming for precisely the right type of development for this parcel. It had to showcase high quality homes with environmental amenities.

A 30-acre conservation easement over part of the property must remain forever undeveloped. A multi-use trail will be created on the open space of the development. The municipal golf course is adja-

cent to one end of the property.

"We settled on creating a villa neighborhood with 60 low-maintenance homes and an estate section with 91 lots," says Scott Stosser, president of SAS Builders, Inc., the primary builder, though any contractor can build for a homeowner using the design standards.

The Villas

In Roman times, a villa was a large, luxurious country estate. An English villa is a smaller detached house in a residential district. "Our villa homes are closer to the British style," explains Shelia Hedrick, residential coordinator for SAS Builders.

Ranging from 1,780 to 2,190 square feet, the villas feature solid, stick-built construction, 9-foot ceilings on the main level and master suites with guest bedrooms upstairs. A new design with two and three bedrooms for one-level living was created in response to requests for a single-level floor plan.

An architectural review committee oversees aesthetic details like landscaping



Stosser

and exteriors of high quality, solid-color vinyl with a minimum of 35 percent brick or stone. Once the villas are complete, a homeowners' association will take over the architectural review and management responsibilities.

Villa lots range from \$72,000 to \$120,000. Three completed villas are between \$299,000 to \$337,000. SAS Builders has three plans, each with three elevation choices. Bonus rooms, garages, unfinished storage spaces, front and back porches and a small study are some of the options. To maintain attractive curb appeal, none of the villas will have exposed foundations, super bright colors or solid garage doors.

Jeff Stosser, who works with estimating and financial planning, has worked closely with Balzer, Inc.'s architectural division. "We have created functional designs with fine amenities in each villa. Many of our decisions were based on responses to survey results," he says.

Interesting angles in the ceilings, oak railing trim, high efficiency appliances and soothing beige and cream colors lend a contemporary air of comfort and space. Upgrades are available, and owners may customize the residences.

Estate homes

The estate lots are opening with prices in the \$80,000 to \$200,000 range and some exceed a half-acre in size. Builders are welcome, and custom homes are expected to be the norm for this area.

Most of these large lots have incredible views in almost every direction. The ones which border the 30-acre conservation area have protection forever from development on this



boundary of land.

"We left the open space on the crest, even though some grading will be necessary to blend with the roads and access," Scott says. "Buyers can build any type of home they want here, as long as it conforms to the design standards."

Owning the view is the most appealing amenity of buying at Fiddler's Green.

The land rises more than it appears from the street, and it embodies a soothing environment with natural open space and conservation land.

EarthCraft, Energy Star

Doug Burges, associate developer with SAS Builders, and seven of his colleagues recently completed their certifications to construct an EarthCraft House.

"We are excited about building an EarthCraft House in

Fiddler's Green," says Burges. "The home will also automatically qualify for the Energy Star home rating."

EarthCraft House was created in 1999 as a residential green building program of the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association.

The program has expanded in the Southeast and serves as a blueprint for energy- and resource-efficient homes.

One EarthCraft House can increase energy efficiency by 30 percent. The non-profit program considers the entire site plan for efficiency and conservation, while Energy Star only rates the building. Trees, orientation, site layout and landscaping are all part of the EarthCraft philosophy.

"There's a misconception that having an environmentally friendly home means making sacrifices somewhere," Burges

explains. "An EarthCraft House is a high-performance, durable and resource-efficient residence. There are several checkpoints in planning, construction and installation. For example, you must understand building science when you insulate a house. Even the highest 'r value' insulation installed improperly is ineffective."

SAS Builders' commitment to sustainable development nests nicely with the EarthCraft House slogan: "sensibly built for the environment."

Fiddler's Green and The Villas at Fiddler's Green are aimed at those who seek quality, efficiency and comfort with the convenience of an in-town residence, natural open space and the "town and gown" energy of Blacksburg.

(Joanne Anderson is a Blacksburg-based freelance writer. www.jmawriter.com)