

Developers Crafting Herb River Bend To Appeal to Families

By Mary Beth Spence

TBR Staff

Thirty acres of prime real estate on LaRoche Avenue are being developed into Herb River Bend, an upscale gated community where developers intend to showcase Southern traditional architecture. They're also capitalizing on the redevelopment of a popular private elementary school under construction adjacent to the development.

The group of area investors behind the new residential area are focused on developing a family-friendly neighborhood with sidewalks, fenced yards, a clubhouse and a children's park.

Herb River Bend, located between Majestic Oaks and Windfield subdivisions, overlooks a magnificent marsh view and contains 64 lots in the first two phases of the community. "The response has been more than we could have asked for," said Carey Shore, one of the principal investors and owner of Shore, Bell & Seyle Realty.

The neighborhood doesn't include your typical cookie-cutter cluster of homes. Instead, the residences all project their own unique design, ranging from cottage-type facades to Georgian two-story homes. "We have a nice blend of homes - not a hodge-podge," said Harry Shore. "There is a great mixture that is reminiscent of Ardsley Park and the islands. For example, we have a traditional Lowcountry residence, and another with a Victorian flavor."

Carey Shore concurred. "These are 'city' lots - like Ardsley Park, but larger. The larger homes are taking on the character of Isle of Hope and Ardsley Park," he said.

While there are community covenants in place, Shore maintains that they are drawn to the benefit of all residents. "The covenants and design standards are set to ensure the integrity of construction and to make it a friendly atmosphere and a neighborhood for children," he said.

One specific covenant details that homes must be constructed at a minimum of 2,000-square feet. "Most homes will be much larger than that," said Shore.

The \$6 million dollar project has been in development for nearly two years, and, in addition to Shore and his wife Ginger, other investors include Harry Shore, Ed C. Johns, Jr. and David Gilpin. "We have the potential of developing 17 additional acres. The lots are priced from the low \$100,000s to the mid-\$200,000-dollar range," said Carey Shore.

"The homes range from \$450,000 to \$900,000," he said, "and there are currently 15 homes under construction."

Local Savannah builders constructing homes in the community include Shore's son, Harry, with Shore & Blanton Construction, his son-in-law, E. C. Johns, with E.C. Johns Custom Homes, Hallmark Homes and Gilpin Construction.

Amenities will include a community clubhouse equipped with an exercise room. A large children's playground and two swimming pools encompass the recreational area.

Additionally, the investors also purchased a small tract of land across the street from the main entrance on LaRoche Avenue. The .54-acre site has been cleared, and Shore said that plans include fencing the area and adding benches for a private, marshside "adult park."

Besides the main entrance on LaRoche Avenue, Herb River Bend's second gate, located on Howard Foss Drive, backs up to Hancock Day School's new campus, currently under construction and scheduled to open in January 2008.

"We are excited to have Hancock behind us. This will be so convenient for our families in the neighborhood, and they will be able to walk their children to school," Shore noted.

Development Projects Driven by Pooler Parkway

By Mary Beth Spence

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The Pooler Parkway has proven to be a catalyst for growth, leading to an abundance of new residential communities and commercial complexes. A group of local investors recently opened a new 27,000-square-foot shopping area located adjacent to Pine Barren Road.

Morgan's Corner spent more than a year in development and construction and is now home to 15 tenants located in three separate stucco and brick buildings. Morgan's Corner Group, LLC is comprised of 15 investors in addition to principals Jim Sheffield and Carey Shore. The buildings were constructed by Shore Blanton Construction, with colors and distinctive awnings selected by exterior designer Cullen Murphy.

"We're in the heart of the west Chatham County growth area," said Shore. "The Pooler Parkway has already become a major connector road. When the Savannah International Airport Road crosses I-95, it becomes Pooler Parkway, and then when it crosses over I-16, it becomes Quacco Road, which extends all the way to Highway 17."

Shore said that the development group realized the growth potential after intensive population studies were completed. "There are more than 75,000 people living within a 15-minute drive of the Pooler Parkway," he said.

Just a stone's throw away on Pine Barren Road, construction is ongoing at Oglethorpe Square, a community of two- and three-bedroom condominiums, and other communities including Bridgewater, Somersby and Harmony Homes, all located near West Chatham Elementary School and Middle School. All this is positive news for Morgan's Corner, which should experience booming business from these neighboring communities.

"Morgan's Corner was originally developed into six commercial lots, and we sold three of them," said Shore. "We wanted to create a neighborhood shopping area for the residents of west Chatham and Effingham County," he said.

Sheffield and Shore have collaborated on several commercial projects, and Sheffield also owns 10 convenience stores in the area. His commercial interests include not only rental properties, but sites within the Tybee Island community as well.

As a longtime supporter of small business, Sheffield's experience includes service with the Small Business Assistance Corporation, so he has stepped in as property manager of Morgan's Corner.

"Our first tenant opened in the complex 60 days ago," said Shore. "We have some great local companies coming into the area."

The tenants in Morgan's Corner include Lo Cost Pharmacy's third location, Jalapeno's, Papa John's Pizza, Pat Parker's State Farm Insurance Agency, Merle Norman, Party Makers, Distinctive Marble and Tile, Ozzy's Grill, White Dry Cleaners, Savannah Joe's Coffee Shop, Shore Blanton Construction, Dollars and More, Maid Pro, Mei Jia Chinese Restaurant and Parkway Salon.

"At this time, we only have one space available for lease in the complex," Shore said.

In addition to Pooler, Shore said that their focus is to also serve the residents of Southbridge, Rincon, Port Wentworth and Berwick Plantation. Savannah Quarters, a 2600-plus acre community featuring single-family homes, villas and townhomes located a short distance north on the Parkway from Morgan's Corner, also has future development plans for that sector. The Village at Savannah

Quarters will offer shops, restaurants and offices, a planned Westbrook BP gas station, and a new site for Atlantic Southern Bank.

Land has been cleared and prepared for construction of Lowe's and a Wal-Mart adjacent to Morgan's Corner, and on the northwest corner of the intersection, plans are under way for development of Pooler Town Center. The 400,000-square-foot shopping complex featuring traditional village architecture will include three town squares housing retail stores and restaurants. "We are in the early stages of development, and will begin construction based upon tenant demand," said Andrew Feiler of Metro Properties. "It's a positive sign for the area that Lowe's and Wal-Mart are coming."

As for Morgan's Corner, both Shore and Sheffield are eyeing expansion plans already. "Plans are in the works for another professional center to be built next to Morgan's Corner," said Sheffield. "This would be a smaller site, with approximately 10,000 square feet of commercial space."