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RENTAL HOUSING

RENTALS ON THE RISE

For-sale housing is still stumbling, but rental housing is picking up. These successful projects have all the right ingredients.

By Susan Brady, Senior Editor

The area is known as the Energy Corridor and attracts young professionals working at the oil and engineering companies headquartered on that side of town, says CEO Mark Humphreys. "If you've been relocated from Louisiana or California and have a \$2,500 per month allowance for housing, you don't want to buy a house, and you don't want to live in a typical apartment project," says Humphreys.

Newport is anything but typical. Many units have attached two-car garages. The two-bedroom apartments (designed for women, he says), have 11-foot-deep walk-in closets in the master bedroom. There are two dining areas, a dining room and a breakfast room, "which is unusual for an apartment, but not for a house." Apartments range from 650 to 1,380 square feet.

Humphreys describes the architecture as coastal style, typified by siding and shingles. It's appropriate for this site with its man-made lake. "We wanted to tie the architecture to that feeling of being on the water, and the indigenous landscape that you would see on a beach." The groundcover of pine needles, and native plants such as pine trees, live oaks, palmettos and fountain grass, require little water. Turf was used only on the bocce ball court and the "sundowner deck," which is actually a grassy area overlooking the lake. "People can sit out there on Adirondack chairs, have a glass of wine and enjoy the sunset," says Humphreys.

Kayaks and bicycles are provided free to residents. There's also a clubhouse with a business center, fitness center, conference room and full kitchen, and a resort-style pool and spa with an outdoor kitchen.

Newport on the Lake was 95 percent leased at press time. It was developed by Cambridge Development Group, Houston, and built by C.F. Jordan, Dallas.



RESIDENTS of Newport on the Lake can borrow kayaks to paddle around the community's man-made lake.

Photo: Richard L. Muniz Photography