

NEWS

GHO Homes, with projects galore, expects 'solid year' for new home sales

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GHO Homes, the principal new home builder in 32963, has geared up for season across a broad front on the island and mainland as well.

"The beach club at Seaglass is open now, which we are very excited about, and the first residents have moved into their new homes in the community," said company president Bill Handler.

"There are several inventory homes at The Strand that are ready for seasonal buyers, and we are opening a second phase at High Pointe, where sales have been very strong, and the clubhouse is almost finished. And we just completed our model home at The Reserve at Grand Harbor."

The Reserve, which has raised the standard for new residential construction on the mainland with large, island-style luxury homes starting between \$1.7 million and \$1.96 million, is part of Grand Harbor, one of Vero's most highly regarded county club communities.

Handler opened a 38-home first phase at The Reserve last year and has sold more than a dozen homes going into season. A second phase will include another 35 to 40 homes.

Handler expects about 30 percent of his buyers to come from the island, people downsizing out of older homes that may need substantial upgrades and are ever more expensive to insure. He said another 30 percent will come from the Northeast, while the rest come "from all over the world."

Island buyers won't feel cramped in space or style in the new homes, which incorporate large open spaces and are loaded with the latest luxury finishes and features, including 12-foot ceilings and 8-foot, solid wood interior doors, with resort-style swimming pools standard. Stone is used lavishly.

"These homes were designed for The Reserve," Handler told **Vero Beach 32963**. "They wouldn't fit on the lots at the Strand or Seaglass."

Handler said lots at The Reserve, which average more than a third of an acre "are 60 feet wide with a lot of depth, which gives the homes an estate-like feel."

"Bill has studied the island market and understands it," said AMAC Alex MacWilliam agent Shannon O'Leary, whose clients have purchased homes in The Strand and Seaglass. "He knows what the market desires and has streamlined the design and customization process. He isn't building cookie-cutter houses."

Handler said many upgrades and luxury features are included in the base prices of the five models offered at the Reserve. "We wanted to do something fairly all-inclusive so that people don't have to pay for a lot of upgrades."

At the same time, Handler is ready and willing to customize the homes to give each buyer exactly what they want in their Florida dream home.

"It is pretty standard in the industry for salespeople and builders to say no to changes," Handler said. "They like

swimming pool and travertine paved pool deck.

Altogether, the outdoor space of this home would serve nicely for the guests of a small hotel. It is that expansive.

"People are excited when they get here and see the model," Handler said.

Besides space and luxury, new homes at The Reserve have multiple additional virtues, according to O'Leary, including much lower insurance costs, a factor that has become critical in Florida in the past several years.



PHOTO BY JOSHUA KODIS

to say no – 'No, we don't do that. This is what we do,'" because it is easier to build production models.

"My mantra is to try and say yes, first. Especially in these homes, which stretch our price point upward. It is worth it for us to stop and listen and figure out how to make the changes that give customers what they want."

"GHO is known to be very flexible and easy to work with when it comes to options," said Suzanne Curry, a member of the Rita Curry team at Dale Sorensen Real Estate who is familiar with the Grand Harbor market. "When people buy a new house, especially at this price, they expect to be able to make changes to suit their taste and lifestyle, and Bill Handler has it down when it comes to that. He really does."

GHO has an inhouse design studio that was just remodeled and upgraded, and he says buyers can expect "a dream experience," working with his staff to customize their homes.

The just-opened "Riviera" model home illustrates the scope of the homes offered at The Reserve, with 3,600-square-feet of air-conditioned space and more than 5,000 square feet under roof – not to mention another 2,000 square feet of screened outdoor space extending from two covered lanais, which includes the large designer



"Insurance costs have gotten out of control," O'Leary said. "I feel confident steering my clients to GHO's new homes. Bill is building a product that is up to all the current codes, from impact windows to strapping, and that benefits our clients on a lot of levels, from physical safety during a storm to financial safety because of lower insurance and maintenance costs," compared to aging homes built in the 1970s or 1980s.

O'Leary said GHO's homes have advantages over custom homes as well.

"It can take three years to do a custom home," she said, from finding land to design and permitting and then the always uncertain construction process, "and custom can easily end up 20 or 30 percent over budget. With GHO, you get into your home much more quickly and you know pretty much what the cost is going to be. That transparency is very important."

Handler said a buyer who signs a

contract this week at The Reserve will be able to move in by the end of the year, "in 10 or 12 months."

He also maintains a small inventory of completed spec homes in his subdivisions that are move-in ready, often with key luxury upgrades.

On top of the benefits of stylish new construction, buyers at The Reserve gain instant access to a full-featured country club lifestyle, something increasingly difficult to find in Vero, where many clubs have multi-year wait lists for new members.

Handler bought the land at The Reserve because it is part of Grand Harbor and is intent on integrating the new community into the Club.

"Every house we sell here comes with a sports membership in the club," Handler said. "We pay the initiation fee, which is a big number, but it's worth it because it attracts buyers."

Dale Sorensen agent Wendy Rochester agrees. She has a client who purchased a home in The Reserve that's under construction now, and she said it was the country club lifestyle that sealed the deal for them. "They wanted to be inside the gates of Grand Harbor."

"My first impression of Vero Beach from years ago before we started building here came from ads I saw promoting Grand Harbor," added Handler, who never forgot the glowing images.

"We're here because of the way the place has come back to life – the economics they've put into it. The quality of the renovated golf courses, the remodeled beach club, the social life and friendships that come with a country club lifestyle are all huge selling points. You can't find another place to build with these kinds of amenities already in place."

"Bill Handler is a super-duper guy, and we are thrilled to be working with GHO Homes," Grand Harbor Club general manager Michael Gibson said last summer. "They're not only selling beautiful homes, they are also selling our lifestyle."

Handler said new home sales in Vero have leveled off after the intense activity seen in the Pandemic real estate boom, but he expects "a solid year in 2025."

With that in mind, he has secured land for five more new subdivisions in coming years, in addition to the eight active developments he has underway in Indian River County.

Future projects include Riverfront Groves, a 72-home luxury subdivision a block north of Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital, next to the site of Quail Valley's upcoming racquet and lawn sport complex. ■