

COURANT REAL ESTATE – Property of the Week
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Say hello to your new homestead at Phillips Farm

By Margaret DeMarino

After more than four decades living in the same house raising three children, David Cone, 74, might be expected to tear up when he talks about the old homestead. Not for a minute.

Cone says he often passes his former home when out on a stroll. “I say, ‘That’s a nice house,’ and I keep on walking.”

Where he walks back to is the house he and his wife, Gail, 72, moved to in April at nearby Phillips Farm, an active-adult community of luxury homes in East Hartford. “Our new home here is so nice, we don’t miss the old one and we certainly don’t miss the work,” said Cone.

When the Cones wax eloquent about their new digs, it’s not only about the construction, but the attitude of the builders and staff.

“Here you can do anything you want,” said Gail Cone, referring to how she was able to customize her home to fit her needs.

The community will have 66 homes based on six models, and customer customization, of course. There is a common fee of \$175 a month.

“We are used to making customized changes since most of our business is in higher-end customized homes in Avon,” said the builder, Bill Ferrigno, president of Sunlight Construction of Avon.

“We are bringing that same philosophy into a more moderately priced product at Phillips Farm.”

Ferrigno is the president of the Home Builders Association of Connecticut, whose mission is to provide educational resources and training to builders.

Some of the changes Ferrigno is willing to make include moving closets and windows to accommodate furniture. “Someone might say, ‘My bed is bigger than this; what can you do?’ A lot of builders don’t want to make changes. We do it because we know how to do it, and we feel our customers deserve it,” Ferrigno said.

“Clients appreciate that. Sometimes even a little change or a nuance makes a great difference in the way someone views his or her home,” he said. “It’s just our way of extending customer service to our clients.”

Homeowner Leigh Ersevim, who worked for 32 years as a nurse anesthetist, said she was attracted to the property because of the openness and flexibility of the floor plan.

All models have a second floor, but Ersevim located all of her home’s amenities on the first floor.

“There’s not one thing I have to go up for,” she said. “The first floor has a laundry room, for example. And I love having an attached garage.”

Ersevim, 64, who was one of the first people to move into Phillips Farm, admits to being a little envious of the custom changes that newer homeowners are dreaming up, including one neighbor’s extra-wide garage doors.

Other design enhancements the builders have accommodated include wine cellars, customized kitchens, tray ceilings – even a stair lift to the second floor.

“The people moving in right now have even more options than what we thought about!” she said.

Still, she said, she has no regrets and considers Phillips Farm a find. She moved from Pawtucket, R.I., to be closer to her grandchildren in Glastonbury. “The people (staff and builder) bend over backwards here to help you,” she said.

Her neighbor David Cone agreed. “From the moment you walk in here, they are all so helpful and friendly. It makes you feel, why would you want to go anywhere else?”

Another plus, said Cone – who worked at Pratt & Whitney for 37 years, many of them as a tool and die maker – “is that the quality is extremely high. I’ve seen a lot of construction in my life, so I know.”

The homes are artfully designed. For example, one popular model, the 2,100-square-foot Cornwall, features an 18-foot-by-18-foot-6-inch great room with a cathedral ceiling. A slender arched window above the fireplace gives the impression in winter that snowflakes are falling and melting into the fire.

The Cornwall also boasts a formal dining room with wainscoting and an angled cathedral ceiling.

There are gourmet kitchens in all models with many upgrades available, such as granite countertops.

Numerous standard features include first-floor master suites and laundry rooms. The homes also have 10-foot-square patios or decks, attached one- or two-car garages, easy-care vinyl Thermopane tilt-in windows, full basements and underground utilities, second-floor storage and 30-year asphalt shingles.

Popular options include a screened-in porch, a three- or four-season sunroom, a whirlpool bath, central vacuum, hardwood floors, a security system, a surround sound system, and much more.

The community has a friendly village setting with picket fences, Colonial-style lampposts and sidewalks. Paint colors of soft sage, Victorian gray, white and Colonial yellow complement the design. The builder is even planning to plant trees along the village green.

A third generation homebuilder, Ferrigno likes Phillips Farm’s “great group of diverse customers.”

“It’s not just a business relationship,” he said. “We really enjoy working with our customers.”

Come see for yourself Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.