

Phillips Farm brings top-quality adult homes to a booming section of East Hartford

By Philip Medeiros
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EAST HARTFORD – The Silver Lane corridor has a lot going on these days. It's always had several shopping outlets, a movie complex, and a supermarket; in recent years, it added Rentschler Field. Now, most of the buzz is about Cabela's mega-store, which begins to do business this week.

Less noticeable than these commercial ventures, but of quite significant impact, is the adult community that has been springing to life just across from the supermarket and movie theater.

Phillips Farm, a 55-and-over enclosed neighborhood, has been turning heads in the community and among buyers with its exceptional construction and high-end feel while staying well below the gaudy price range of similarly high quality homes.

That has a lot to do with the builder, Bill Ferrigno. Ferrigno, who is President of the Home Builder's Association of Connecticut, is a 3rd-generation home builder who started Sunlight Construction in 1977. Much of Ferrigno's work has been concentrated in affluent, suburban communities like Avon, Simsbury, and Farmington.

His carefully crafted homes and communities have garnered awards for over a decade, from his first builder of the year award in 1994 to his most recent, a 2006 recognition for the "Cornwall" floor plan. The Cornwall is one of nine floor plans at Phillips Farm, bolstered by the addition of three new ranch-style floor plans.

The ranch-style homes are the latest twist at Phillips Farm, dropping prices as low as \$249,900 for the 1,150-square-foot "Clinton" model.

The Cornwall, like the majority of the homes in the 66-unit, 18 acre development, is based on a cape-style home. But you can throw any ideas about neatly divided quadrant-style capes out the window with this aggressive, stylish design.

We entered the home through the two-car garage, which accesses the house through a mudroom with washer and dryer hookups. That's the entrance that will really bowl visitors over when they walk into the 333-square-foot great room, which seems even larger thanks to a cathedral ceiling and attached breakfast area at over 100 square feet. Light pours into the room with large windows that cross the house's back wall, including a central Palladian window. Centered along the back wall is a gas fireplace with optional marble surround, one of many luxury upgrades available. There's also an optional sunroom adjacent to the breakfast area along the back of the house.

The great room circles into an attractive, modern kitchen that, in the modern style, overlooks the larger area with a counter that serves as a half-wall. Connecting to an elegant foyer is the dining room, which has a cathedral ceiling.

A large master suite rounds out the first floor, its 225-square-foot bedroom complemented by attached walk-in closet and bathroom, one of 2 ½ baths in the Cornwall.

The upstairs isn't excessive in its square footage, as one expects with adult housing. Yet there are two bedrooms connected by a balcony that overlooks the great room, with a central bath. The setup is ideal for parents whose children may drop in for stints at home around their college schedules, as is the case for Linda Burns.

Linda's two daughters are enrolled in college, and one was home, sequestered upstairs as Linda explained what attracted her to the community.

"We were looking for the ease of living in a small house, but having someone else take care of it," she said, sipping a cup of tea after work. "We took a ride over," with her husband, Gerry, from their home in Hartford's West End, "and loved the model."

She pointed to the quality of Ferrigno's construction as one drawing point, but also emphasized the quiet, friendly, mature environment.

Linda and Gerry hadn't looked at new construction, she said, and had focused on West Hartford and Bloomfield in order to stay near Hartford.

"Frankly, the cost here – if it were on the other side of the river, the cost would be more," she said. "We were thrilled."

And since the move, she adds, the development has come along nicely, allaying any fears of a less-active community of retirees.

Instead, she said, she found a good mix of working adults who interact well and, like herself, are happy to be there.

"It's feeling like a nice community," she said.