

Wilbow attains goal with Barton Woods on Conroe's southeast side

By Howard Roden
Courier staff

It was nearly three years ago that developer Chas Fitzgerald had a vision for Conroe's southeast side. And while the challenging economic times delayed the timing for his master-planned community, Fitzgerald has attained his goal with the recent grand opening of Barton Woods.

Located off South Loop 336 east of FM 1314, Barton Woods' initial 125-acre development is adjacent to Conroe's Carl Barton Jr. Park. While construction on the first six tract homes is nearly complete, builder Brighton Homes already has finished a build-to-suit home for the community's first residents.

Linda Wright, Brighton's new home consultant, expects more to follow now that there's a model home and available inventory for prospective buyers to consider.

"My traffic is up 500 percent now that people can see the value we're offering," she said. "More and more people are moving out from Houston, and Conroe's a hot destination."

Targeting the "move-up" buyer, Brighton Homes offers 20 floor plans from 2,800 to 4,600 square feet. One- and two-story models are available on half-acre, quarter-acre and 8,000-square-foot lots, each with a wooded back yard.

Prices range from \$240,000 to \$400,000, Wright said.

Custom home builder Walter Gray Homes will join the project sometime in October, Fitzgerald said.

As president of Wilbow USA Corporation, Fitzgerald announced plans for Barton Woods in December 2006. He said he never thought to halt the project, as the positives that initially lured the Dallas-based firm to the Conroe market remain strong.

"There was a time when we did some soul searching. But compared to the rest of Texas and the country, the job market here is attractive," Fitzgerald said. "The schools here are very good, and the economic development opportunities through the city, the chamber of commerce and the county make for an attractive package."

Barton Woods is Wilbow's lone development this year, he said.

"We're very transparent with our banks, and we take a conservative approach. This is why we have good balance sheets."



Staff photo by Howard Roden
Barton Woods, located off South Loop 336 on the southeast side of Conroe adjacent to Carl Barton Jr. Park, recently held a grand opening for the master-planned community.



Staff photo by Eric S. Swist
The "Wellington" model home at Barton Woods features five bedrooms and four baths and is 4,044 square feet. The home features a large kitchen with an island and granite countertops throughout.

A section of 60-foot-wide lots is tentatively scheduled for development in spring 2010.

Originally, Wilbow had planned a lineup of home builders, but they fell by the wayside as victims of the economy, he said. Brighton Homes has had a presence in 60 communities throughout the Houston region, said area president Rick Trotter.

“The vision Wilbow has for this development is excellent,” Trotter said. “You get the quiet, serene atmosphere, but it’s convenient to Interstate 45 and other areas of Montgomery County, like The Woodlands. The (new home) market is picking up, and the value of homes continues to increase.” Fitzgerald noted the independent appraisal of the first home sold in Barton Woods exceeded its sales price.

“That is fantastic,” he said. “That is the goal we’re trying to achieve.”

Wright said that while Barton Woods’ target market is that of second-and third-time buyers, Brighton Home has put an emphasis on amenities such as detached and/or three-car garages, crown molding, granite tops and whirlpool tubs in the master bath.

“There’s also an open concept with two-story dining rooms and archways,” she said. “There is an emphasis on that spacious look.”

Adding to that value is Wilbow’s development concept that relies on landscape architects, rather than civil engineers, Fitzgerald said. More than 700 trees will be planted during the build-out of the community.

In addition to landscaped medians throughout its neighborhoods, Barton Woods will have a hike-and-bike trail that will end up at a new playground site in Carl Barton Jr. Park. Another amenity will be a half-million-dollar center with adult and children pools and a southern-style cabana.

Because Barton Woods is located adjacent to the city’s 200-acre park, residents will have access to baseball and soccer fields, a fishing lake and various nature trails.

For more information about Barton Woods, call (936) 441-5043.

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Staff photo by Eric S. Swist
The “Wellington” model home at Barton Woods features five bedrooms and four baths and is 4,044 square feet. A game room sits at the top of the stairway and can house a pool table or big-screen TV.

Barton Woods

Location: Off South Loop 336, adjacent to Carl Barton Jr. Park in Conroe, 2-1/2 miles east of Interstate 45

Dimensions: Initial phase – 125 acres, approximately 325 homesites.

Homebuilders: Brighton Homes (tract and build-to-suit); Walter Gray Homes (custom)

Homes: Currently, 20 floor plans available in one-and two-story houses

Lots: One-half acre, one-quarter acre and 8,000 square feet

Price range: \$240,000 to \$400,000 (approximate)

Amenities: Landscaped medians, amenity swimming pool and cabana, hike-and-bike trail (next summer) and direct access to city of Conroe Carl Barton Jr. Park.

HOA: Community to be managed by Vision Communities Inc. All lots deed restricted and all new homes reviewed and approved by an architectural review committee. Annual dues \$650.

Infrastructure: All streets concrete and utilities underground. Electricity provided by Entergy Texas, gas by CenterPoint Energy, phone/Internet/video by Consolidated Communications. Water and sewer facilities provided by city of Conroe through MUD No. 1 with a tax rate of 60 cents per \$100.

Police and fire: City of Conroe

Schools: Conroe ISD: Runyan Elementary, Wilkinson Elementary (2010), Travis Intermediate, Washington Junior High, Conroe High School.