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Town Commons finds its groove

Daily Press & Argus

When it was first proposed to the city of Howell, Town Commons - located on M-59 on the city's north side - was both controversial and innovative.

The controversy was due to its density. The plan was for 420 living units that included single-family homes, condominiums, apartments and an assisted living center on M-59, between Byron Road and Oak Grove Road, and butting right up against Howell Township. It also included retail shops, parks and a community center.

The innovation came from its concept.

Developers billed Town Commons as the traditional neighborhood development with houses built next to each other, retail within walking



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distance, and a lot of areas for children to play in. Even better, the development has access to water and sewer, because it's part of the city of Howell.

After a sluggish start, the developers now say that Town Commons is catching on.

"There are certain portions of the population that really don't like the idea of having a great big lot and they don't want 2 acres to mow," said Jeff Doyle, co-owner of Doyle Homes Inc. and a builder in Town Commons. "Here they can walk to Kroger or the Purple Mushroom.

"It's a huge advantage. If you need a half-gallon of milk, you can walk as opposed to getting in the car and driving somewhere."

Doyle, based out of Brighton, is one of a handful of construction firms that are building in the Town Commons development.

The firm has built 10 townhouses and six single-family homes, which range in size from 1,260 to 2,200 square feet.

When Town Commons opened to the public a few years ago, sales of the homes were sluggish.

Aaron Tassell, director of planning and marketing for Town Commons, said the main focus was to bring out great

beautiful houses, but initially the costs for those homes was expensive.

"We've since reduced square footage and found ways to engineer them to be less expensive while maintaining the same quality," she said.

Tassell said home sales have gone up this summer.

"I think people are getting more confidence in the economy," he said. "We introduced a new product line that has helped with sales. They are still traditional-style homes, but homes that are a little less expensive."

Currently, there are 18 completed townhouses, with 12 sold. The apartments are 90 percent leased.

There are 36 homes completed, and 28 have been sold. Retail space is 75 percent leased, with two occupants looking at remaining spaces, which include a spa and a pizzeria.

Doyle said that sales have been about where they expected them to be.

"It's not going to be a 50-unit-a-year development," he said. "All homes are custom-built homes and custom-designed."

Doyle said that a price adjustment jump-started sales to where more units are moving than in the past.

"When we started, everything was \$300,000-plus," he said. "We got down to around \$200,000 and it made a difference. That helped pick it up and broaden our □horizons."

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