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Friday, March 11, 2005



Elizabeth Conley / The Detroit News

Kay Kroll, of Christenson-Elms, works at a model of one of the Ivanhoe-Huntley homes that will be auctioned in Canton.

Going once ... 36 homes in Canton

Cherry Hill Village units on the block as builder plans to start nearby home project.

By R.J. King / The Detroit News

CANTON TOWNSHIP -- Psssssst!

Searching for a new home?

Well, if you've got several thousand bucks and a gambler's temperament, you can bid on one of 36 new homes up for auction in Canton Township.

West Bloomfield-based Ivanhoe-Huntley Cos. is holding the auction Saturday at Cherry Hill Village to close out its remaining condominiums and homes priced from \$250,000 to nearly

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\$800,000.

"Since we began advertising the auction (two weeks ago), we've had 14 offers come in," said Kris Gosselin, vice president of sales and marketing.

For winning bidders, it could pay off with savings of 10 percent to 15 percent of listed value.

"The homes that have been reserved so far are running a little north of 90 percent of value," Gosselin said.

Cherry Hill Village is designed to harken back to old-fashioned neighborhoods with tightly clustered homes with front porches and spacious parks and other common areas. The subdivision will undergo a \$175 million expansion next year.

Since 2002, about 500 homes have been sold by Ivanhoe-Huntley and other builders.

Ivanhoe-Huntley has hired Christenson-Elms in Jupiter, Fla., to handle the auction.

"Home auctions were something we were introduced to last year in Highland Township when a homeowners' association auctioned off several vacant lots," Gosselin said. "We had some homes in the same subdivision and we were able to sell five homes and three lots in a week."

Auctioning off newly built homes isn't the norm.

"It's very unusual. I heard about it years ago," said Stuart Michaelson, president of Windmill Group Inc., a home builder in Farmington Hills. "It will be very interesting to see the results. It's an innovative way to do it. If they're successful, I'm sure we'll see it again."

Cherry Hill Village, developed by Biltmore Properties Corp. in Troy, is part of a trend in residential construction where distinctive Victorian and Cape Cod-style homes are set near streets and sidewalks to promote interaction among neighbors. Amenities often include small parks, sports fields, community centers, stores and restaurants.

The so-called new urbanism subdivisions have caught on in Metro Detroit, said Robert Gibbs, founder and principal of Gibbs Planning Group in Birmingham. New urbanism communities can be found in Beverly Hills, Dearborn and Macomb Township.

"We are getting more work from home builders who want to embrace the new urbanism concept," Gibbs said. "It's a trend that's here to stay."

This weekend's auction by Ivanhoe-Huntley is an attempt to sell its remaining condos and homes and get started on a nearby project.

It will coincide with a separate auction for four homes and nine lots at Woodland Springs, an Ivanhoe-Huntley community in Howell.



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Later this year, the company plans to start work on Villages of Cherry Hill at the northeast corner of Cherry Hill and Ridge roads. The project will offer five housing products, including single-family homes, condos, loft-style residences and active-adult dwellings. The latter two housing types will be set in separate, four-story buildings offering 40 units per structure.

"We'll have underground parking in the four-story buildings along with elevators," said Gary Shapiro, a partner with Steve Perlman of Ivanhoe-Huntley Cos. "The loft-style units will have exposed ceilings, large windows and open floor plans. We should have everything built out in three years."

Last year, Ivanhoe-Huntley was the state's fifth largest builder. Jeff Goulet, community planner for Canton Township, said he has been satisfied with the progress at Cherry Hill Village. "The builders at Cherry Hill have done fairly well, and now they're adjusting their product mix to reflect buyer demand," Goulet said.

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