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Green is the scene



By [Linda Rawls](#)

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Call Green Cay Village controversial, as NIMBY neighbors did. Call it energy-efficient, as Florida Power & Light does. Or call it workforce housing, as the county does.

But please don't call it low-income housing.

Green Cay Village

Palm Beach County's first workforce housing development, marketed directly to teachers, police officers and other workers priced out of homeownership.

Location: Corner of Jog and Flavor Pict roads.

Size: 43 acres; 160 condos, 100 townhouses and 160 apartments.

'Green' features: 'Energy Star' rated appliances; high-efficiency air-conditioning units; R-30 attic insulation; energy-efficient hot water heaters; native-plant landscaping; and recycled-water lawn irrigation.

Deed restrictions: One unit per buyer; buyer must live in unit; if buyer sells unit in first year of ownership, developer retains 100 percent of any profit, 50 percent of profit in second year and 25 percent in third year.

Housing costs

- Two- and three-bedroom townhouses starting at \$292,900.
- Two- and three-bedroom condos starting at \$198,900 and \$244,900.
- One-, two- and three-bedroom apartments with monthly rents of about \$650 to \$800

Source: Green Cay Village

A splitting market



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chest," said Mulligan, who moved in nine days ago. "I was renting, and I couldn't find anything to buy in my price range until this.

"Now I have a home, and I don't have to worry anymore."

Mulligan put down a deposit the first week Green Cay Village opened its sales office and was among the first new homeowners to move into the 420-unit development at the corner of Jog and Flavor Pict roads. The \$85 million collection of Tuscan-colored condos, townhouses and apartments is priced to be affordable for teachers, nurses and police officers - the county's "essential workers."

Instead of marketing Green Cay Village the usual way, the developers went straight to where they knew the buyers were: police stations, schools, hospitals, county government offices and the like. They did this even before the county mandated that developers set aside a percentage of their new homes for workforce housing.

"When we first started, the term 'workforce housing' wasn't even invented," said Green Cay Village developer Jerry Goray of Goray Communities in Boca Raton. "We said we were going to build for Middle America - people who have been priced out of the market."

A reflection of the times

Palm Beach County was one of those markets.

In just five years of boom-time housing appreciation, existing-home prices soared by triple digits in Palm Beach County, but incomes rose by a measly single digit.

A startling survey last year by the Housing Leadership Council of Palm Beach County concluded that 90 percent of the county's households could not afford to buy the median-priced single-family home, which cost \$392,900 in the first quarter of 2006.

Home prices have remained relatively stable this year as the market cooled down, dropping in February to a median price of \$374,300 for an existing single-family home and to \$209,600 for an existing condo, according to the Florida Association of Realtors.

The prices at Green Cay Village range from about \$198,900 to \$299,900. That's reflective of the fact that Palm Beach County's gap between home prices and what workers can afford to pay - a divide of more than \$200,000 last year - pushed the need for affordable housing to crisis level.

"You wouldn't believe the calls I continue to get on a daily basis," said Suzanne Cabrera, president and chief executive of the Housing Leadership Council of Palm Beach County, a private nonprofit group formed last year to ease the affordability crisis. "There's a tremendous demand out there."

The development is already 90 percent sold out, said Daniel Travis, broker-associate for Green Cay Village - and the community of 160 condos, 100 townhouses and 160 apartments is still being built.

Energy efficiency

Green Cay Village's units have designer touches usually found only in more expensive homes, such as granite countertops and ceramic tile. The buildings even have elevators. The complex has an elegant clubhouse and pool, fitness center, kids' play area and volleyball court - premium features that add value but are offered at no extra cost, developer Goray said.

But Goray is most proud of putting the "green" into Green Cay Village. The community uses recycled water for lawn sprinkling, has high-efficiency Trane air-conditioning units, upgraded "healthy home" carpets, Energy Miser hot-water heaters and Energy Star-rated appliances. FPL, a subsidiary of Juno Beach based FPL Group Inc. (NYSE: FPL), designated the entire community "Energy Efficient."

Meanwhile, there's a waiting list of more than 200 people for the rental apartments, said Randy Rieger of Housing Trust Group in Coconut Grove, the other Green Cay Village developer.

Rents for one-, two- and three-bedroom units range from about \$650 to \$800. That compares with a market rate of about \$1,600 in Palm Beach County last year. Applications began pouring in last week for Green Cay's apartments, which will be finished in May.

Mulligan said her mortgage and monthly maintenance fee combined are less than what she paid in rent.

Teachers such as Mulligan aren't the only buyers lured to Green Cay Village, though.

"We've attracted a number of active seniors," Goray said, and he couldn't be happier about that.

Seventy-five percent of the buyers are "essential workers," Goray said. Of those, more than half are first-time home buyers.

"That's very significant," Goray said. "Mission accomplished."

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