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Community property: Shared sustainability key feature of Sea Glass on Sanibel Island

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Sustainable Sanibel community planned: A sustainable, green community is currently being planned in Sanibel. (video courtesy of WINK News)



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Written by **Lindsay Downey** Special to The News-Press

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As an environmental studies student, Kellie Anderson admired the homes her father built, but pushed him to envision a more eco-friendly future.

"She was telling me from the start, 'Dad, you're doing the same old stuff. This is not what's going to be going on in the future,'" said Mark Anderson of Fort Myers-based Benchmark General Contractors. "Being a dad, I heard it but I didn't act on it. And then the economy hit and it really got me thinking."

Anderson is doing more than thinking now. He's developing what should be the most sustainable community on Sanibel Island.

Sea Glass of Sanibel is expected to break ground in January.

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Community gathering room at Sea Glass on Sanibel / Renderings special to news-press.com



Mark Anderson of Benchmark General Contractors and his daughter, Kellie, are breaking ground on a 12-home sustainable community that's being planned for Sanibel called Sea Glass. Kellie was an environmental studies student who pushed her father to take on the project that she had envisioned. / Molly Zolman/news-press.com



Community guest bath

Less

daylight hours, even in the bathroom.

Kellie Anderson sits in on meetings and consults with her father on the project. She lived on Sanibel and in other areas of Southwest Florida, and wants to help the island conserve its land.

"Construction is one of the biggest wasting resources our culture has," said Kellie, who graduated from Naropa University in Boulder, Colo. "I grew up here and watched this area transform from a natural landscape to gated communities and squares and boxes."

And if you ask the Andersons, that's not where the building industry is headed.

"There's a shift that needs to happen within our communities to become more unified and less individual in our values," Kellie said.

Twelve Sea Glass homes will be built on about 5 acres at Periwinkle Way and Purdy Drive. Anderson will donate an additional 7 or so acres of adjacent land to the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation.

FGCU's School of Engineering and the University of Florida's School of Architecture are consulting with Anderson on the project, which already has picked up 2010 Florida American Institute of Architects and Gainesville AIA honor awards in the unbuilt category.

Range of ideas

Anderson called on UF architects to help him plan what sustainable development could look like on a barrier island. Martin Gold, director of the Florida Community Design Center and UF's School of Architecture, and his team came back with ideas that spanned from wind farming and an eco-meadow to a "lite house" concept with 18-foot windows.

"It's very open in the way it collects daylight," Gold said of the concept. "You would never have to turn a light switch on during the

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“Shading devices outside are light shells, if you will, so they protect the direct rays but allow sun to bounce off the surface and deeper into the space.”

Real estate agents and interior designers helped Anderson survey thousands of people online from across the U.S. and in Canada, France, Germany and the U.K on their real estate preferences. About 75 percent said they would like to live in an eco-friendly community.

In considering Sanibel’s market as well as survey results, Anderson deviated from UF’s recommendation of a contemporary aesthetic and went with a look he calls “Zen,” modeled after Sanibel City Hall.

Homes will likely run between \$800,000 and \$1 million, depending on sustainability features. They’ll have open rafters, cisterns, landscaping based on permaculture techniques, gardens, shared green spaces and one-car garages with electric car stalls. The community will forgo asphalt roads for a 10-foot-wide grass trail with a brick surface.

One structure will provide community space with sleeping quarters for residents’ guests. Deep wells will cool and heat the community house as well as the individual residences.

“It brings geothermal into a scale of feasibility,” Anderson said. “We’ve co-opted the infrastructure to be applied to the whole subdivision.”

FGGU is working on geothermal and engineering strategies for the project, some of which may be patented. Anderson is still open to

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ideas as he works out the technical aspects for Sea Glass.

“Someone’s going to come up with a green roof concept and some of these sustainable strategies. I don’t want to restrict the application if it’s done right,” he said.

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