

# REAL ESTATE

## *Behind gates lies upscale security*



**Security:** An artist's rendition shows the front of the Enclave, a 12-home gated community in Pikesville. The houses, designed by Masterpiece Homes, sit on three-quarter-acre lots.

**Privacy:** Gated communities, such as the Enclave in Baltimore County, are drawing more buyers who value exclusivity and security.

By MARY E. MEDLAND  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

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It's often a scary world out there. But that's not especially new — many would say it's been that way for centuries upon centuries.

Consider, for example, the medieval castle — probably the earliest gated community that comes to most people's minds. Protected by a moat and drawbridge, it offered safety and security — basic human cravings — to its inhabitants.

But the idea had been around long before that. Wasn't it the walled city of Troy where the Greeks rolled a great wooden horse to its gates?

The idea of a living space that offers privacy and security has a solid history. And while the technology has certainly changed (the moat's drawbridge did the same work — keeping unwanted visitors out — as today's electronically controlled gate) the concept remains much the same.

That is the philosophy behind the Enclave, according to Richard Livingston, managing partner of Masterpiece Homes, an affiliate of Chateau Builders, who is overseeing operations for the 12-home gated community off Old Court Road in Pikesville.

"A large portion of the buyers [for gated communities] are empty-nesters, who still have fine furnishings and artwork," Livingston said. "Gated communities keep out the curiosity seekers and keep traffic down."

Even if the gate doesn't enclose the entire community, it does keep traffic out — typically, there's



NANINE HARTZENBUSCH: SUN STAFF

## Building a community

Richard Livingston, managing partner of Masterpiece Homes, says gated communities are increasingly popular among empty-nesters.

only one way in and one way back out — and that alone increases security. The gate and fence, however partial they may be, give an illusion of security.

In Baltimore County, a gated community means the roads become privatized and public services, such as trash collection, don't come inside the gate. The homeowners association packages snow removal, lawn cutting and fertilization, and trash collection. The cost to the Enclave homeowner: \$400 a month.

Marc Witman, an agent with Long & Foster Real Estate Inc. and president-elect of the Greater

Baltimore Board of Realtors, said: "These communities are for those who want a 100 percent maintenance-free lifestyle."

Base prices for homes in the Enclave are between \$539,900 and \$605,900. In addition to security, Enclave promises exclusivity.

So far, four of the homes — designed by Dennis Jankiewicz of Baltimore's Design Collective — have sold; two are occupied and the other two are expected to be occupied in June.

But there's more than just exclusivity that's being offered.

"Today's homebuyers want real neighborhoods. The typical subdi-

vision approach to new homes is waning in both popularity and practicality. Buildings and their relationship to each other form the basis for something very important — they not only define where we live, but the very fabric of how we live," Jankiewicz said.

"Having to do a customized house can be too complex and too time-consuming for the average person," Livingston said. "Basically, Dennis Jankiewicz conceptualizes and comes up with plans that are creative and have what people want, yet can be adjusted specifically for each person's needs."

"It makes it [See Enclave, 2L]



# *Behind the gates: security, upscale living*

[Enclave, from Page 1L]

as simple and cost-effective as possible to create custom homes for buyers."

Enclave's homebuyers include two homebuilders, a physician and educational psychologist, and a corporate controller and psychologist. Prospective buyers include attorneys and physicians.

For those experienced at such high-end home sales, business has been pretty good.

"At the Enclave, four have already sold, and it's been on the market maybe six months," said Libby Berman, a Realtor with Long & Foster, and one of the Enclave's listing agents. "The sales are absolutely wonderful, and I expect the rest to be sold in the next year."

Indeed, Livingston and his partners felt secure enough about the Enclave's potential that they never bothered with focus groups to get feedback about the project.

"All the [principals] of Masterpiece live within three to four miles of the Enclave and have a sense for the market," said Livingston. "And, by being part of the community, we are known for our integrity as builders."

## **'A secure, intimate feel'**

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### 'A secure, intimate feel'

The empty-nesters who are expressing the greatest interest in the Enclave clearly aren't ready for the two-bedroom apartment. They want more space — albeit with less responsibility for maintenance — to accommodate grown children and, especially, grandchildren.

"The economy is contributing significantly to the demand for these houses, and I suspect that a lot of people are able to do this because of the stock market. The stock market may have paid in full for the houses," Livingston said.

"I think the market could benefit from more communities like these," said Witman. "As [baby] boomers get older, they still like nice houses and many aren't ready for two-bedroom condos."

Masterpiece's Enclave really is an enclave, an area with distinct boundaries, said Livingston. "It doesn't have the feel of sprawl, but has a secure, intimate feel."

It also has its own moat of sorts — a pond, complete with ducks, birds and geese, and forest conservation area.



**Top model:** The Wyeth, shown in this artist's drawing, is the largest and most expensive of the homes offered in the Enclave.

The houses are spectacular, with huge rooms and many amenities. Of the four sold, three have the master bedroom — with walk-in closets and master bath — on the first floor. Upstairs are four more bedrooms, closets and two full baths.

"Of the sales so far, everything the buyers need is on the first floor, while the upstairs is for children and grandchildren," Livingston said. "Buyers want to have a place for the grandchildren and, for large family events, they want privacy, but having neighbors nearby also gives them a sense of security."

Although there is considerable room for customization, the homes are designed to visually work together, rather than to make any dramatic individual statements.

Nevertheless, buyers can specify the features they want.

"You have the ability to customize a house, with the guidance

of an experienced builder," said one Enclave buyer and empty-nester who was living in an older home in need of significant renovation.

"The quality of the materials that the contractors have used has really been impressive."

### Traditional style

In spite of its use of the most up-to-date appointments, such as two-zone high-efficiency heat and air conditioning, JennAir appliances, Pella ProLine windows and patio doors, the Enclave retains a most traditional style.

"The architectural look and feel is a very traditional silhouette with modern overtones," said Livingston. "They're not ultra-contemporary boxes, but reach back to the old-fashioned houses of the 1920s."

"We're trying to set a tone of simple elegance, yet when one looks at the house, it still feels up-to-date."

The houses, all with three-car garages, are on three-quarter-acre lots and begin with a center hall. "The front of the houses also have grouped casement windows, which creates a look that is warm and traditional, but without shutters," Livingston said.

There are curved staircases with balconies. "The master bedroom suite has large walk-in closets for two people, each with its own dressing space, and the bathrooms have large showers and tubs, and separate vanities — not just separate basins," Livingston said. "Each person has six feet of separate space."

### Other areas

Although not exactly gated communities per se, other developments in Baltimore County respond to the desire for upscale privacy. One is Westwicke, on the grounds of Maryvale Preparatory School for Girls, and another in the county is Valley Gate. Another

enclave is GreenTree, an upper-end, luxury townhouse community.

David Thaler, of Baltimore-based D. S. Thaler & Associates, an engineering, surveying and planning firm, said, "I think there's a market. Everyone wants to live in a secure environment, and in some cases that desire manifests itself through a gatehouse. But security is always an issue, as are good schools, in selling houses."

"And people will pay for this, when they can."

Libby Berman agrees.

"Gated communities, like the Enclave, give people a sense of security, and people are more and more willing to pay for that security," she said. "People who live in those kinds of communities want good security, which makes it more difficult to be victims of crime."

"People are willing to pay," Berman said, "to have control over their community."