

MERIDIAN WOODS OFFERS HOMEOWNER LIFESTYLE WITHOUT HASSLES

Grand Opening showcases downsized homes for upsized lives

by Julia Versau
Special to the Times

Meridian Woods is an exciting new concept in the housing market. Designed for people who want to simplify their lives and upsize their free time and life-enhancing activity, Meridian Woods should enjoy a hearty welcome from northwest Indiana residents.

Time is the essential consideration for people looking to remain homeowners, but shed the majority of homeowner hassles. At a certain stage in life, people realize that time to travel, to watch grandchildren in baseball games and school plays, to volunteer, to take classes and join reading clubs – in short, to really live life instead of putting it on hold – is of critical importance.

An open house featuring homes built by Coolman Communities, Inc. will be the public's first major look at Meridian Woods. The company will host its Grand Opening October 2-9. Model homes will be open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed Friday and Sunday), and a mortgage representative from Centier Bank will be on hand to discuss visitors' financing options.

Located on Campbell Street in Valparaiso, just a few yards north of Valparaiso High School, Meridian Woods optimizes the things downsizers and empty nesters say they really want. Contrary to popular myth, homeowners looking to make the move to a no-stress lifestyle usually do not wish to pack off to Miami or Brownsville. They want to be close to family and friends, near city parks and services, and not cordoned off in neighborhoods removed from the heartbeat of community life.

With its prime location near Rogers-Lakewood Park and the walking/cycling path that runs along Campbell Street, Meridian Woods is also close to the Forest Park Golf Course, shopping centers, grocery stores, and movie theatres. The Meridian Woods neighborhood itself will be a delight for residents with its attractive duet homes, wetlands, ponds, gathering place, and colorful landscaping. Residents here will benefit from the careful planning that has gone into Meridian Woods – planning that gives homeowners freedom from mowing and home maintenance to pursue their own interests.

The duet homes offer an ideal amount of space and an attractive layout at prices starting about \$151,900. The Aster, for instance, is a two-bedroom, two-bath home with an open design living room and dining room area. An upstairs bonus room is an ideal third bedroom, storage area, media room, or home office. It's also a great place to let the grandkids have their own rumpus room. Features like large walk-in closets, wide hallways, and other amenities make the residences convenient and accessible. The homes also have two-car attached garages.

The Aster model on the open house tour is shown with an optional 3-season room, a beautiful extra space that allows a sunshine-filled space for enjoying the outdoor vista. The Trillium offers more square footage and also has a master suite design with master bedroom and bath in its own private area. All of the homes come fully equipped with appliances. And many of the duet homes by Coolman Communities have views of the pond and wooded areas at Meridian Woods.

People looking to live in a community like Meridian Woods will love the options. The model homes are fine residences, with maple cabinetry, hardwood floors, and attractive fixtures. But homeowners here have the opportunity to choose their own amenities. Seasonal rooms, flooring

and fixture selections, fireplaces, and other items can be added as upgrades in the duet homes. That means homeowners can design a maintenance-free home in a brand new neighborhood that reflects their personalities, architectural preferences, and lifestyles.

In addition to home ownership without maintenance issues, residents of Meridian Woods will not pay property taxes. A number of years ago, the Indiana State General Assembly passed legislation to provide for a special form of home ownership in age-restricted communities that exempts residents from paying property taxes. The title of the property is held by the not-for-profit Pines Village Retirement Communities, Inc.

A nominal monthly fee covers all maintenance, property and liability insurance, landscaping, snow removal, garbage service, and other services, as well as use of community assets like The Gathering Place, a soon-to-be-built center with exercise room, coffee shop, and hospitality suite for parties and get-togethers.

In the words of Dee Berger, Coolman's project manager at Meridian Woods, the homeowners get to "have their cake and eat it, too."

"It's the best of both worlds," Berger said. "Residents enjoy the full pleasures and benefits of home ownership without property taxes, maintenance hassles, mowing. We also have a handyman and housekeeper service which allows residents to pay a small fee to have other things done, like house cleaning, furniture moving, or painting."

That suits residents very well, indeed. John and Kathi Crise, the first residents at Meridian Woods, say the community is ideal.

"Everything is taken care of and we love it," John said. "We even have the handyman service come and put the salt in our water softener."

Tris and Lou Brown enjoy Meridian Woods' proximity to all that is good about Valparaiso, including the occasional wildlife sightings.

"I like to watch the deer," Lou said. "I still see them prancing around here."

IF YOU GO

Coolman Communities, Inc. will host a Grand Opening October 2 through 9. The model homes at Meridian Woods will be open for visitors from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily (closed Friday and Sunday). A mortgage consultant with Centier Bank will also be on hand to answer visitor questions about mortgage financing options. For more information, call (219) 477-2505 or visit www.coolmanbuilt.com.

TO GET THERE

Meridian Woods is located on Campbell Street in Valparaiso, just north of Valparaiso High School. To get there, take U.S. Hwy. 30 to Washington Street, go north on Washington to Lincolnway, then west on Lincolnway to Campbell. Follow Campbell Street north to Meridian Woods, on the west side of the street. From U.S. Hwy. 6, travel to Meridian Road (which turns into Campbell Street) and proceed south to Meridian Woods.

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