

South Montgomery  
County Woodlands



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
PARTNERSHIP

## News

### **The Woodlands drawing builders, buyers in spite of recession** **Houston Business Journal - by [Allison Wollam](#)**

A lag in the local housing market is not a drag on The Woodlands, where builders continue to stake claims for new construction. “We have seen a real uptick in activity,” says Buck Driggers, vice president of residential sales and development for [The Woodlands Development Co.](#)

In the first half of the year, he says seven builders purchased 338 lots for new homes in the community.

The list includes [D.R. Horton](#), Partners in Building, [Pulte Homes](#), [Beazer Homes](#), [Ryland Homes](#), [Toll Brothers](#) and J. Patrick Homes.

Driggers notes that most are making their debut in The Woodlands, while Ryland and Pulte are returning after a long absence. He says 92 lots under contract have closed and Partners in Building and J. Patrick Homes have already completed model homes. The seven builders will be offering homes priced from the \$160,000s to more than \$1 million.

Driggers believes builders are beginning to roll out new products and that they see The Woodlands as a prime market to enter. “They’ve been sitting on the sidelines for so long, and now they’re ready to get their name out there again and The Woodlands is a good place to start because it’s so established,” he says. “I think they’re smart to get in now as the market begins to recover and margins go back up.”

Driggers says it still isn’t cheap to purchase lots in The Woodlands where they are priced 30 percent higher than anywhere else in the local housing industry.

He says The Woodlands Development Co. has made a few minor adjustments in order to attract traffic back to the master-planned community.

The company eliminated the starter-home product — or homes priced under \$200,000 — from its communities a few years ago, but recently signed deals with Ryland Homes and Pulte Homes to bring that product back to the community. “We realized that we were missing out on sales and that some of the parasite communities surrounding us were picking them up in the starter-home market,” he says.

He notes that the development company has even raised prices in some of its villages, depending on the neighborhood. Overall, homes in The Woodlands are priced from the \$140,000s to over \$3 million.

Kimberly Paulus, vice president of sales for Pulte Homes’ Houston division, says price stability in North Houston as well as quality schools and high-end amenities are among the reasons Pulte

chose to purchase 42 lots in The Woodlands. She adds that the homes will be designed to appeal to empty-nesters who are looking to “right size” their homes after their children moved out, as well as first-time move-up buyers.

Pulte is building homes from 1,600 square feet to 2,550 square feet in The Village at Creekside Park in The Woodlands. Homes start in the \$170,000s. “Even in this economic downturn, The Woodlands is definitely a place that we wanted to be,” Paulus says.

The Woodlands’ Village of Creekside Park is Pulte Homes’ second new community this year. In May, the Bloomfield Hills, Mich.-based builder opened in the Woodforest community in nearby Montgomery.

While The Woodlands is in the midst of new building activity, the rest of the Greater Houston area hasn’t been quite so lucky.

New construction of single-family homes dropped 55 percent during the first quarter of this year, compared to the first quarter of last year, with 5,150 starts, according to statistics from Houston-based market research and consulting firm Metrostudy.

Local new home starts were off 70 percent from the first quarter of 2007.