

Building Scene

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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What's in a name? Plenty, builders say

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

The diversity of residential development names is amazing.

This Pointes, That Something, Animal Run, Wood Acres, Blank Ridge, Such and Such Estates, So and So Farms, Whatever Lakes, Somewhere Pines, There Meadows, Here Hook, and Three Ridge Pine Wood Lake Meadows Estates — names aren't selected by accident.

Gary Shapiro, president of the Ivanhoe Building Co. in West Bloomfield, said development names can be critical to a project's success.

Ivanhoe's most recent developments include Mission Springs, Pointe on Pleasant Lake, and Woodland Ridge — the last in association with Biltmore Properties — all in West Bloomfield.

"Names give a community a sense of identity," Shapiro said. "A big part of what the developer does is to set the tone for a community."

Setting the tone for a community includes a name, logos, entrance signs, architectural and landscape styles — all of which creates a distinct feeling and attracts a certain type of person, Shapiro said.

But it all begins with a name, he said. Shapiro said the process of naming the development begins the moment he acquires a parcel of land.

Generally, he said he starts by identifying geographical features and then proceeds by taking into account the community and the market he is targeting for the development.

OTHER DEVELOPERS might

start with different criteria. But Shapiro said he begins with a geographic theme because he takes great pride in the lengths Ivanhoe goes to retain the natural elements of development sites.

After he determines the dominant geographic elements, Shapiro said he begins the long process of brainstorming, late evening doodling and soul searching.

"I may pick 50 names before settling on four or five that I really like, and then I play with these for a while," he said. "There's no magic to it, but there's got to be some thought behind it."

After settling on the best options, Shapiro said he reviews his favorites for weeks (sometimes months) until finally one stands above the rest.

A good name, he said, shouldn't be trendy, because it has to stand the test of time.

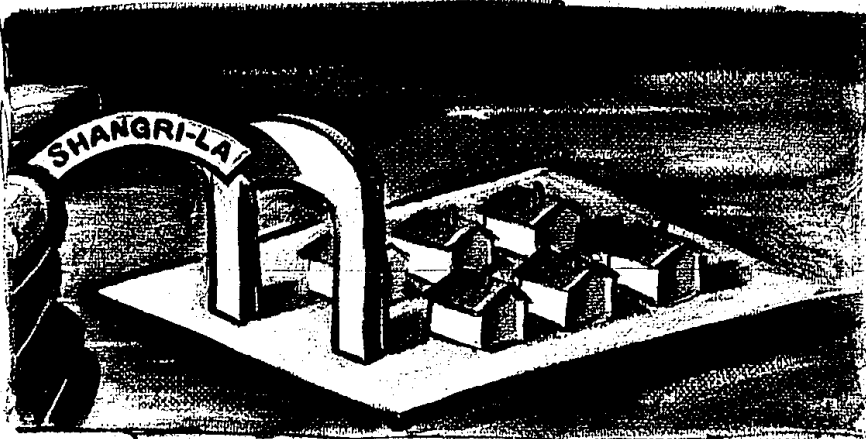
"When I finally pick the name, I really like it and feel comfortable with it."

Once named, a development retains that name as long as it exists, Shapiro said. "People who live there live with it from the beginning to the end — they want something that makes them feel comfortable."

BERNARD GLEBERMAN, president of Crosswinds Community in West Bloomfield, said naming a development harkens back to the age old idea of the community or village, he continued.

It makes a development distinctive. It turns a somewhere into a destination, he said.

Gleberman said he likes to choose



a name after researching a site or community's history. In the case of Millpointe, Gleberman chose that name for his Westland development of single-family homes because the project was developed near Nankin Mill.

Developing Millpointe around the Nankin Mills theme was actually one of his easier choices because it was such an obvious selection, he said. "That was the one obvious thing about that area and its history — everyone knows about the mill."

After being built sometime between 1835 and 1842, the first Nankin Mill served as the focal point of what was then Nankin Township, operating as a grist mill to grind grain of nearby farms.

The mill's significance to the surrounding area continued into this century. The existing mill building was constructed during the 1860s and was purchased by Henry Ford in 1918 for use as a small auto parts manufacturing facility.

Henry Ford, in response to the urbanization of the automotive industry, sought to mix elements of the city and countryside by developing Nankin Mill and similar buildings into small factories.

Nankin Mill and the area's history figure prominently in the development's marketing, Gleberman continued. The sales office displays old photographs and histories about the area.

"I don't think you have to be a history buff to appreciate it."

Tying a development into a local history gives it a sense of belonging, he said. "It makes people feel there's a reason for that community being there."

Developments aren't always named after historical figures and events, Gleberman said. Naming developments after previous owners of the property — a farmer whose family owned the land for generations — is also quite common.

DEVELOPMENTS NEED not be

named after geographic features or historical anecdotes. Some developments are named after significant nearby objects.

Mark Erickson, legal counsel and spokesman for Frankel Associates in Troy, said Somerset North — the developers new residential project — was very deliberately named after the Somerset Mall.

Now called the Somerset Collection, Frankel Associates developed the mall in Troy more than two decades ago. Sometimes, names take on a life of their own, he said.

"Somerset has come to mean a certain location," he said. The Somerset name has come to represent more than just the mall, but a part of Troy (and even Royal Oak).

Erickson said it isn't uncommon for people to give directions to the area by saying it's "by Somerset."

Developers and businesses have appropriated the name over the years for use on office buildings, medical supply companies, cab com-

panies, cleaners construction, health, hotels, limousine companies and even apartments.

Frankel Associates couldn't prevent others from using the word "Somerset," Erickson said, but fortunately that extensive use hasn't diminished the image.

It's not surprising, then, that Frankel Associates — the company that started it all — would use the name for its own luxury, single-family home development Somerset North.

"Somerset has come to mean value and quality," Erickson said.

Marketing for the development relies heavily on the Somerset name and the development's proximity to the Somerset Collection, he said.

Somerset, Erickson admits, does carry a connotation of upscale, but even more important is that the words have become synonymous with value and quality.



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