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A wine-tasting room and an opportunity to buy a private wine locker are amenities that attracted residents Ruth and Roy Meyer to the Carlyle condominiums near the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. Condo owners gather for regular wine tastings.

Taking the bait

Standing out in a crowded new housing market is getting more difficult, so some developers are getting creative.

By LYNN UNDERWOOD
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When new home sales are the slowest in more than a decade, how does a developer attract buyers?

With wine-tasting rooms and culinary events led by five-star chefs, on-site horse stables, a massive clubhouse with a state-of-the-art fitness center and craft rooms where residents can take a scrapbooking class.

"With infinite housing choices, we're always fighting to bring eyes to our new communities," said Michael Noonan, president of Toll Brothers' Minnesota division and president of the Builders Association of the Twin Cities. "Amenities are one of the ways to set you apart."

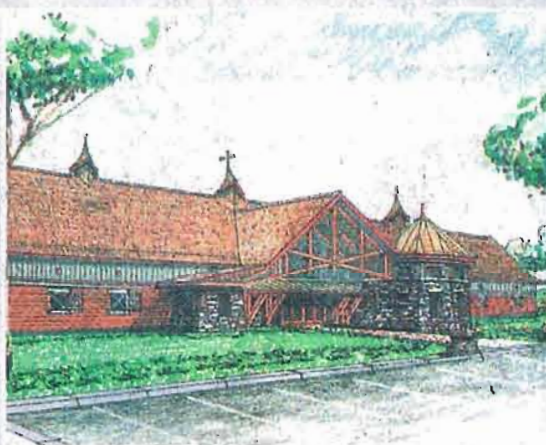
These days we're not talking about your run-of-the-mill swimming pools and walking paths.

"In today's overstuffed housing market, you have to be creative and cutting-edge and give the buyer something exciting," said Rachel Igel, owner of Chevalle Development Co. The Chanhassen firm is building a 300-acre Chaska development called Chevalle, which will have a 40,000-square-foot equestrian center and more than 250 homes near Lake Bavaria.

Igel's company has created the nonprofit Reins of Hope to partner with area organizations that provide therapeutic equestrian services for children and adults with disabilities.

Bait continues: Some strive to be like

HEY, LOOK AT ME! HOW DEVELOPERS ARE ATTRACTING BUYERS:



CHEVALLE DEVELOPMENT CO.

Residents can board horses at Chevalle.

CHEVALLE

What: 300-acre development with 200 acres of open space on Lake Bavaria in Chaska.
The bait: 40,000-square-foot equestrian center, indoor riding arena and acres of pastures.
Price: \$450,000 to more than \$1.5 million for single-family homes.
Estimated monthly association dues: \$125.
Status: Under construction; equestrian center will be built next summer.
Occupancy: Spring 2008.
Address: 3720 Bavaria Road, Chaska, 952-556-1714. www.chevallehomes.com



K. HOVNIANIAN HOMES

A 13,000-square-foot clubhouse is a big draw.

FOUR SEASONS AT RUSH CREEK

What: "Active adult" community of 300 homes for ages 55 and older in Maple Grove.
The bait: 13,000-square-foot clubhouse with a "lifestyle director," ballroom and craft room.
Price: Starts at \$385,000.
Monthly association dues: \$230.
Status: Model homes are open and the clubhouse will be completed this month.
Occupancy: Late 2007.
Address: 7546 Shadyview Lane N., Maple Grove; 763-424-9991. www.khov.com/Home/MN/UH/_Properties_AUTH.htm

Inside: Two more projects with unusual amenities H5

Taking the bait

◀ BAIT FROM H1

Residents also benefit — they can board a horse at the stables and trot on nearby trails.

"We're finding Chevalle is attracting people who have an interest in horses or who own a horse," said Igel, also a horse enthusiast.

Although developer Tom Wartman's 44-unit Kinsel Point condominium project in Minnetonka is smaller in scale, he's hoping to create a big stir with an unusual amenity geared toward buyers who "appreciate fine cuisine and eat out at the best restaurants," he said.

Kinsel Point will play host to celebrated local chefs including Rick Kimmes from Oceanaire and Tim McKee from La Belle Vie and Solera. They will take turns whipping up gourmet meals for resident foodies and their guests in a regal "Epicurean Club Room."

"The cooking area is open, so diners and their guests can interact with

the chefs," said Wartman.

K. Hovnanian Homes of New Jersey is modeling one of its Twin Cities-area projects after the high-end spas and resorts that many baby boomers are accustomed to enjoying while on vacation.

The centerpiece of their first Minnesota "active adult" community — Four Seasons at Rush Creek in Maple Grove — is a 13,000-square-foot clubhouse that rivals many suburban community centers.

Four Seasons homeowners will be able to swim, enjoy a sauna, throw a party in the ballroom, exercise with a personal trainer, play billiards or take a craft class without ever leaving their subdivision.

"It's supposed to feel like a resort with all you want at your fingertips," said Doug Fenichel, K. Hovnanian director of public relations.

At the Carlyle condominiums in downtown Minneapolis, buyers are being wooed with a sophisticated climate-controlled wine-tasting

room and the option of buying private wine lockers that hold up to 40 bottles.

Project manager Tom Dillon admits that such upscale features are "pure marketing to distinguish our condo project from others."

Staff from Sam's Washington Avenue Wine Shop will hold bimonthly wine tastings in the wine room near the building's elegant lobby.

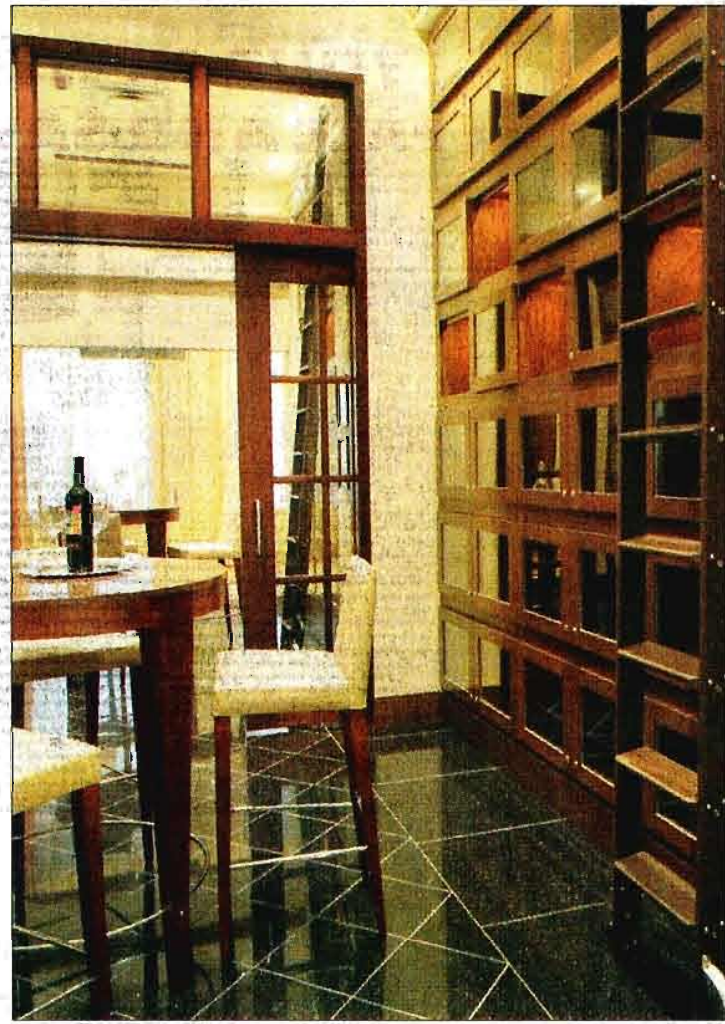
Residents also can use the room to sip wine with friends — pulling out their primo vino from their own walnut wine locker.

"It's also a little bit about status to have your name on a wine locker and display your collection," Dillon said.

The stylish wine-tasting room helped seal the deal for recent Carlyle buyers, Roy and Ruth Meyer.

"It was really classy and added to the other features," said Ruth. "That extra perk convinced us this was the place for us."

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This glass-walled wine-tasting room, where residents can entertain and store their wine collection, is a Carlyle perk.



KINSEL POINT

Kinsel Point touts its gourmet country club with on-site culinary events.

KINSEL POINT AT GLEN LAKE GROVE

What: 44 condos by Glen Lake in Minnetonka.

The bait: On-site culinary events led by Twin Cities chefs and a resident chef.

Price: \$380,000 to more than \$1 million.

Monthly association dues: 32 cents per square foot.

Status: Construction to begin in fall.

Occupancy: Spring 2009.

Address: 14301 Stewart Lane, Minnetonka; 952-938-8600.

www.kinselpoint.com.



RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI • Star Tribune

The Carlyle offers many amenities including a rooftop deck and river views.

THE CARLYLE

What: A 39-story granite and limestone luxury condominium tower in downtown Minneapolis with Mississippi River views.

The bait: 135 private wine lockers.

Price: Starts at \$1,000.

Other amenities: Wine tasting room, fitness center, pool, rooftop deck, great room and business center.

Monthly association dues: \$38 and up.

Status: Occupied; 25 of the 255 units are for sale for \$300,000 to \$600,000.

Address: 100 3rd Av. S., Minneapolis; 612-359-8500. www.thecarlylelife.com.