



Chaska



Herald

Thursday, September 6, 2007



PHOTO BY MOLLEE FRANCISCO

Dave and Rachel Igel stand near a covered bridge in the middle of their Chevalle development north of Lake Bavaria.

Going above and beyond

Local developers challenge traditional housing projects

By Mollee Francisco

David and Rachel Igel can't drive through their Chevalle development without smiling. Though construction equipment and mounds of dirt greet them at each bend in the road, they can already see through to the finished product - 300 acres of rolling hills dotted with homes, but dominated by public green space.

Throughout their site in northern Chaska, there are scatterings of progress. A handful of homes have already been built, wetlands have been created or enhanced, and trails have been paved.

The latter has already given neighboring residents a good introduction to the community the Igels are trying to create.

"People are already out using the trails," said David. "That's great."

"We're very quickly becoming part of the surrounding neighborhood," said Rachel.

Part of the Igels' development centers on the concept of providing public space for all to enjoy, not just those who have

paid the high-ticket price to live in the surrounding homes.

Though the Igels are marketing some 200 homes that range in price from \$400,000 villas to \$1 million-plus lake homes, they have designated some two-thirds of the development for public use.

"We want this to be beautiful for everyone to enjoy. That's one of the reasons we felt it was important to open up the greenbelt."

Though initially skeptical, the City Council opted to approve the Igels' development based on its creation of permanent green space that would be open to the public. In exchange, the area that is located in the heart of the city's greenbelt was rezoned from its original 10-acre lots to allow for clustered housing.

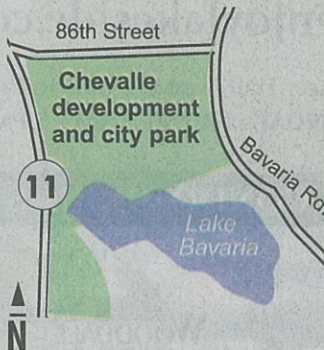
Now some of the benefits of the policy change are beginning to be seen at Chevalle. Parks have been sprinkled throughout the development and more than 10 miles of trails have been created for walking, biking and horseback riding. But those items are just the beginning of what the Igels have planned.

New habitats that reclaim the land's original purposes, butterfly gardens and environmental placards will all be part of the development with an aim

Chevalle

300 acres north of Lake Bavaria
200 homes ranging in price from \$400,000 - \$1 million+
200 acres green space
10.5 miles of trails

Chevalle was one of the first developments that offered the city permanent green space in exchange for clustered housing in Chaska's greenbelt.



Graphic by JONI BERG

to inform those who use the lands.

"We want to make this educational as much as anything," said Rachel.

Chevalle to page 7

Chevalle From page 1

Educational and green

Chevalle developers have already shown a great interest in trying to develop the land with minimal impact.

"We've tried to take advantage of the natural topography while protecting viewsheds," said Rachel, who has a background in environmental law specializing in wetlands. "We've stopped some of the runoff and flowage into (Lake Bavaria) and we've taken out evasive species to re-vegetate our wetlands."

Continuing that theme, the Igels will also encourage their residents to have less of an impact on the land, doing things like urging owners of lake lots not to install sod, and instead opt for more natural landscapes.

They've purchased Adirondack chairs made out of recycled products to place in their parks and other green spaces.

Non-profit

The Igels have also created a non-profit organization called Reins of Hope, designed to act as a facilitator for other non-profits. Their first undertaking was to offer a permanent home

■ For more information, go to www.chevallehomes.com or call (952) 443-4440. Chevalle will also be featured on the upcoming Parade of Homes Fall Showcase with two of their model homes available for tours.

for the We Can Ride program, providing equestrian therapy for children and adults with disabilities.

"They've always had to rely on people for their location," said Rachel. "We're going to offer them a permanent home."

The Igels hope that providing a permanent location for the program will help them to expand their services and eliminate a long waiting list.

Next summer, the Igels plan to break ground on a 40,000-square-foot facility which will provide an indoor riding arena big enough to hold Special Olympics events.

When they tally it all up, they view their project as a call to action for other developers.

"We feel that's where development needs to be headed," said Rachel. "If others can't do it, it makes our victory that much sweeter."