

Peninsula Neighborhood emulates traditional atmosphere

Neighborhood reaches tipping point

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Traditional homes line Foster Road on a bluff situated between Coralville and downtown Iowa City in what is known as the Peninsula Neighborhood. The variety of these individualistic single family homes and the area's historic atmosphere immediately attracted Kevin Morrow and his wife, Mary Langowski, to the developing area.

Mr. Morrow, who formerly worked with a production home builder, bought a white townhouse in the Peninsula and within a year became the development company's project manager. His home is situated among brand new brick townhouses, condominiums, single family homes and an apartment building designed specifically for people with mobility issues.

"I had fallen in love with the concept before and its conservation standpoint. Personally, I wanted to do my part to see it work" he said. "People have an emotional reaction to this neighborhood."

The Peninsula recently entered its second phase and plans to start building a variety of homes soon. Phases three, four and five will similarly consist of establishing more condominiums, townhouses and larger single family homes.

The development — one of the few new traditional neighborhoods in the Midwest — has reached a "tipping point" and is beginning to become alive with people, he said, adding that each open house is packed with interested buyers.

Many new traditional neighborhoods are located in high-population cities like Minneapolis and Chicago, among others.

"They seem to gravitate toward areas that are either denser populations, or in the case of Iowa City, places that see the



KEVIN MORROW

Brand new single family homes edge a tree-lined street in the Peninsula Neighborhood. The new traditional neighborhood is one of the few in the Midwest and utilizes Traditional Town Planning principles.

value of this type of development and want to enact it."

The neighborhood's attractiveness is rooted in Traditional Town Planning principles, he said, adding that it was distinguished as the "Best New Residential Development" in 2005 by the 1,000 Friends of Iowa.

The neighborhood, which was chosen by 1,000 Friends for its responsible land use policy and its aesthetic qualities, among other things, will eventually contain more than 400 homes and commercial spaces.

The Peninsula showcases homes with garages tucked away behind them, limited yards in exchange for more public parks and tree-lined roads, capped streetlights, underground electricity and an individualistic yet financially feasible design. Many of the homes are based on the same design but are changed slightly in order to exude an aesthetically different appearance.

Two Twain homes, for example, are the same height and depth but feature different details and colors both inside and out. Many of the styles of the homes are named after famous authors in honor of the University of Iowa's Writers'

Workshop. Twain, for example, refers to the author Mark Twain. Similarly the streets are named after Iowa City mayors.

"It emulates older neighborhoods," he said. "In 20 years, it will look like it has always been here."

Mr. Morrow described the development's first buyers as "pioneers" and said that interest has continued to pick up as people are able to visually see the shape it is taking. The area's residents include working professionals along with two University of Iowa graduate students. Many commute to Cedar Rapids, he added.

Alan Swanson, a real estate agent with Blank & McCune and a member of Congress for the New Urbanism, said the project is experiencing a renaissance of interest. For example, Peter Katz, author of *The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community*, owns a couple townhouses, he said.

"It was off to a slow start in some ways. I really see it starting to turn around. People are starting to see it," he said. "A lot of people like the style like you say. It's a return to traditional neighborhood feel with porches and alleys behind the homes." CBJ