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Construction to begin soon on Amaranth community in Goodyear

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The flower called amaranth is imaginary, however the community sharing its name has begun to take roots.

Montage Holdings, a Scottsdale-based developer, is creating the master-planned community Amaranth in the newly annexed area of Goodyear. The city added 67 square miles to the south of its original planning area earlier this year.

Grading on the first phase of Amaranth, which will include a town center, school and homes, will begin in the next few months, said Tim Keenan, a partner with Montage Holdings.

An opening date for the first area is scheduled for first quarter 2009.

When Amaranth opens, it will include a downtown with offices for Goodyear city staff, commercial office space, a fire and police department and the first of a dozen planned elementary schools, as well as model homes, Keenan said.

Since Montage began to make progress on its community, the school enrollment has nearly doubled.

"When we first came down here, they had 22 kids in the school and now it's up to 37," Keenan said. "People are hearing what we're doing with more personalized education."

Mobile Elementary School is structured to teach pupils in combined grades, Superintendent Kit Wood said. As the community grows, a focus on smaller classroom settings will continue.

Amaranth will also focus on creating a small town neighborhood feel similar to the Verrado community in north Buckeye, Keenan said.

"That's what the vision of the community is: A more personalized service for everything," he said. "We're going to start off small, but each of the centers will have a police and fire component right in the downtown."

Home prices will also be geared toward first-time homebuyers. Keenan expects home prices to begin at \$140,000.

"The market is terrible right now, but that market really hasn't been explored yet," he said, referring to smaller lots and less costly homes for new buyers.

He plans to design homes with advanced technology capabilities.

"It will be the most technology-wise advanced community in the metro-Phoenix area," he said. "When you buy a \$140,000 house, you will have fiber optic capability at your front door and a full branding system that hasn't been seen in the Phoenix metro area."

Challenges

Building a satellite Goodyear community has its fair share of obstacles. The biggest roadblock to development pertains to constructing a 17-mile road from Goodyear's Estrella community to Amaranth.

There is no direct paved way to get to the area. Currently, visitors must travel 70 miles one way to get to Mobile. When the road is built, the distance will drop to 21 miles.

"This is the 17-mile infamous road we want to call Amaranth Parkway," Keenan said. "The plans for it are 60 percent done. We've got our CFD application in, but the one problem I'm having is that BLM is not looking at it."

The Bureau of Land Management owns a substantial amount of land in the area. Officials are concerned that the roadway could disturb the natural habitat.

But Keenan said Montage is sensitive to the environment and has plans to create animal-friendly road culverts and plant additional trees to enhance the habitat.

"This transportation corridor is vital," he said. "Not only because it serves us for economic development, but because the city of Goodyear has a responsibility to serve the city of Goodyear."