

A treasure Cove of luxury

The Cove at Palmetto Point beckons: 'Have some fun. You've earned it.'

By Libby Boren McMillan



Home cooks as well as caterers will find themselves at home in the well-equipped kitchen.

Off Griffin Boulevard just north of Gulf Harbour, Flaherty's vision is coming to life, in four completed homes, four under construction, and nine homes on the planning board.

Gleaming yachts now float at concrete docks directly behind each stunning single-family residence at The Cove.

The homes all are built by A&F Homes, which Flaherty co-owns with partner Greg Apel. (And if their clients need the perfect accoutrement for their new dock, Flaherty's son Brandon, a broker at Image Charters and Yachts, can help in that department.)

As for the homes themselves, the architect has not had to suffer restraint.

Rustic marble sidewalks, summer kitchens, three- and four-car garages, spas, fountains and media rooms are standard fare at The Cove. Floor plans range from 5,000 to 10,000 square feet.

The well-thought-out master suite master affords the owners luxurious seclusion from the home's main living areas. ▶

When builder Michael Flaherty moved to Fort Myers from Palm Beach in 1994, he brought with him an East Coast yachting mentality.

For eight years, he'd been building homes of uncompromising quality for customers who wanted the finest in architectural design for their homes and every amenity for their big boats — all on the same waterfront property.

Flaherty believed the Gulf Coast eventually would have a similar market, and it wasn't long before the Fort Myers waterfront real estate market exploded.

"I knew when Gulf Harbour sold out there would be a demand for large boat slips," he says.

So when he spotted a natural inland cove near McGregor Boulevard — one with enough turnaround for a 100-foot yacht — he had a clear vision of the high-end, seawalled neighborhood that's now The Cove at Palmetto Point.



From soaring ceilings to art niches, specialty painting and custom wrought iron railings, details make all the difference in this home in The Cove at Palmetto Point. It was listed for \$5.9 million and sold in less than two weeks.

HOME & DESIGN

TURNKEY ONLY

The project's most unique aspect, however, may well revolve around the date a home is listed for sale. Each residence at The Cove is fully designed, built, decorated, landscaped and furnished, down to the alarm clock by the bed, before it goes on the market.

"We do turnkey only," says Flaherty, who was overseeing several crews the day we arrived.

The turnkey option has been a winner; homes are selling as fast as they're listed.

We visited a recently completed home (which sold in two weeks), as well as the home being built for Flaherty and his wife, Leslie.

While each stunning home's floor plan is completely unique, certain features are enjoyed by all buyers.

Grand rooms are exactly that: 24-foot ceilings soar above oversized glass walls that disappear into hidden pockets. Once they're gently pushed out of sight, the great room is open to an outdoor living area with an infinity-edge pool disappearing into the cove beyond.

A&F Homes details include goldleaf accents, coral stone molding, mahogany woodwork, marble floors, 8-inch crown molding and second-floor balconies.

With outstanding attention to every touch, Leslie works with Robb & Stucky designers and custom fauxfinishers to create magic in every room. She walks over to the living room and slides out a hidden wall.

"This," she says, "could hold barware. It goes nicely with this feature." Then she uses a remote control to make a hidden martini bar appear.

The painting effects run the gamut: glazed, cracked, trompe l'oeil. Granite countertops dress kitchens and baths.

"One of our signature looks," Leslie says, "is the two-story columns that support the pool cage. And I really like the Jerusalem marble floors; they don't get slippery and they have an old-world look." Leslie speaks frankly about the market for — and the luxury of — a true turnkey purchase. "Building a home," she says, "will run you crazy. There are millions of decisions. But we've done it for 30 years, so it's easier for us." ▶



The second floor is dedicated to entertainment, with a game room/bar and a soundproof theater room that has 10 leather loungers and a 92-inch high-resolution screen offering an array of indoor diversions.

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