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Taking On the Challenge

By Fernie Grace Tiflis

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Carried on by the third generation of Guenthers, Michigan-based Guenther Homes says it builds a community within a community. Building approximately five to eight subdivisions at a given time, this real estate developer has three words to live by: community, location and value.

These three words, COO Natalie Ceccolini says, are not just slogans, but rather, the heart of the company's mission. "Our goal has always been to grow unique communities tied into their surroundings - a neighborhood rather than a development," she explains. "We seek to strategically locate our communities to make it easier to go to museums, recreational areas, sporting events, shop or commute to work."

Other than the community and location, the company adds that solid construction and careful attention to details increases the value of its projects. Best known as a highly reputable homebuilder, the company says it participates in the planning and layout phases of projects all through development, construction and move-in.

"We are committed on closing homes that are 100 percent done," Ceccolini adds. "We have long-standing relationships [with subcontractors and clients] to provide the best quality homeowners' money can buy and we offer a lot for the money."

Adapting to Changes

Building primarily in Ann Arbor, Mich., and its surrounding counties - Washtenaw, Lenawee, Livingston, Dexter, Pinckney and Monroe - Guenther Homes closed on 120 homes in 2005. It recently finished Foxfire, a subdivision on the north side of Ann Arbor, Mich., conveniently located near the University of Michigan Medical Center, Pfizer Corp. and other research and technical industries. With more than 350 existing homes, Foxfire offers a wide array of floor plans ranging from 2,100 to 3,550 square feet, with prices starting at \$298,900.

Ceccolini notes that although Guenther Homes is a fairly small company in terms of size, it builds large real estate projects. The company has also expanded into retail, apartments and office building construction since its inception.

She adds that the company easily adapts to its customers' requests. "Compared to the past five or six years, people want to customize more today," she continues. "Being a small company, we can do that. We don't have to go through a drawn-out process - we just get the ball rolling and build it." The houses today, she notes, are a lot different from each other even if they all have similar models.

"[Clients] upgrade everything," Ceccolini adds. "But we are flexible. Sometimes homeowners give us some of the best ideas - we follow their trends."

Aside from its flexibility, Guenther Homes is excited to take on new challenges. One of its larger projects, Inverness Woods, located in Chelsea, Mich., consists of about 80 wooded lots, situated near lakes and recreation areas. It was a challenge, according to Ceccolini, because the houses are located on wooded walkout sites. The company made sure all utilities are underground to preserve the natural beauty of the area, she states, and it received approval to use a nearby municipal sewer system



With more than 60 years of homebuilding and development experience, Guenther Homes remains one of Michigan's premier builders of custom homes. It says it is proud to take on challenging projects.



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to minimize tree removal.

"Inverness Woods offers a rare combination of land, privacy and city convenience which enhances both property values and quality of life," Ceccolini says.

Guenther Homes continues the development to date, with five houses left to be built. Another challenging project is its current development, Plum Grove, located in Monroe County. "It's three projects rolled into one," Ceccolini explains.

Plum Grove will have three properties: Plum Grove Park will house condominiums, Plum Grove Village will contain townhouses, and Plum Grove Estates will feature single-family homes.

Ceccolini adds that the community will also include a clubhouse, a pool, exercise facilities, a playground and other recreational areas. "People are wanting to come home and stay home," she says. "We're excited to offer recreational facilities right at home just like in Florida. It suits both active adult and young couples' lifestyles."

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