

A Gainesville couple find condominium is the perfect start for first-time home

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It was the annual Gator/Seminole match-up and Marcella Gonzalez, a University of Florida business major, had traveled to Tallahassee to cheer her team on. Although the Seminoles prevailed that day, Marcella went on to a post-game party hosted by Florida State junior Beau Rightmyer, an information systems major and the rest, as they say, is history.

The couple maintained a long-distance romance for the next two years, often traveling on the Greyhound bus to see one another.

"I remember actually riding the bus down NW 6th Street past the field that is now Oak Gate," said Rightmyer.

That was six years ago and today, the young couple are planning a March wedding.

Beau relocated to Gainesville after graduation, and after apartment living in the northeast area for several years, the couple bought their first home at Oak Gate in February. The development is near Northeast Park where they play tennis and walk their two Yorkshire terriers, Mikey and Gheri.

"We just love the neighborhood. It's very quiet and within a quarter mile we have four grocery (stores) and a couple of gems people don't know about, like the 2nd Street Bakery and Tim's Thai restaurant," said Rightmyer.

Developed by Oak Gate Development LLC in collaboration with AMJ Inc., Oak Gate consists of 94 two-story attached condominium townhomes. This in-fill project is located off NW 6th Street in the heart of Gainesville. One of its selling points is its proximity to downtown, the University of Florida and Shands HealthCare.

Phase I opened in February with 32 units featuring 2 bedroom/1½ bath and 3 bedroom/2½ bath layouts, each with an attached one-car garage.

Square footage ranges from 1,242 to 1,450 and models are priced from \$184,900 to \$199,900.

Homeowner association fees are \$151.40 per month and include all common ground maintenance and hazard insurance.

Its location and price make it an attractive choice for young professionals and the first time homeowner, said Brooke Bass, broker-associate of Keller Williams Premier Properties and Development.

Police, fire, medical and educational professionals are eligible for the Florida Hero's

program, which offers down payment and closing cost assistance, said Yvette Weghorst, loan officer with Peoples First Community Bank.

Models include 9-foot ceilings on both first and second floors, ceramic tile in kitchen, baths and laundry area, spacious closets, 5 1/2-inch colonial baseboards, textured walls and covered front porch. Additional features include full-sized washer and dryer adjacent to the bedroom, computer niche and pre-wiring for cable in all living areas.

Selected models include a screened rear porch and bay window in the dining area.

The kitchens feature maple cabinetry with custom pull-out shelves, a Whirlpool appliance package including glass-top stove/range, microwave, dishwasher and refrigerator with ice maker in black or white, pantry, breakfast bar and laminate counter tops.

Oak Gate is the first multiple dwelling property in Gainesville to offer a fiber optic Internet connection. The billing for the fiber optic service can be bundled with resident's monthly Gainesville Regional Utility bill and costs about \$24.95 per month.

The "fiber-to-the-unit" service guarantees bandwidth on the Internet with a 6 MB upload and 512 kB download speeds, said Tammy Snyder, customer service supervisor for GRU.

"The response to the fiber optic has been phenomenal. The advantage we have is (that) we are local - local equipment and local customer service," said Snyder.

Rightmyer, who often works from his home, says the fiber optic is much faster than his previous Internet provider, and the service allowed him to set up a wireless network for the entire house and yard area.

"It was 1-2-3 easy with a wireless router," said Rightmyer.

The pre-construction residence upgrades include an electric fireplace with custom wood mantel, crown molding, hardwood flooring, stainless steel appliances and a front porch railing.

"The house was customized before we moved in, saving us valuable time and money," said Rightmyer.

Oak Gate also features a children's park and playground, car-care area, barbecue grills and picnic tables. Extensive landscaping of the property includes Southern magnolias, Chickasaw plum and tulip trees, garnering a city Beatification Board 2007 distinction. Oak Gate's Phases II and III will feature an additional 62 units and are slated to open at a later date.

"Everything is within a quarter mile, so whether shopping or going to work, I experience zero traffic," said Rightmyer.

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