



February 26, 2012

## Builders optimistic following Parade of Homes showcase

Lots of people from outside the Cape tour homes.

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For two local builders — one new to the Cape Coral market and the other firmly in place — the recent Lee Building Industry Association Parade of Homes not only was a boon for their businesses but another indication the housing industry is changing for the better.

Turn Key Homes had its grand opening during the showcase of homes and over 2,000 people toured the company's new model, including 650 on the day of the grand opening.

Koogler Homes, which has been in the Cape since, had over 1,200 people through its model in one day and 5,000 over the three weeks. The company sold between 12 to 17 homes after selling eight all of last year.

"I was amazed we had this much activity. It really exceeded expectations," said Diane Kerper, general manager of Turn Key Homes.

"It shocked me," said Don Koogler, president of Koogler Homes. "I just think there is excitement out there. People have a lot of cash that they want to put into a home. They are not putting it into stocks or the bank."

Kerper said many of the people through the home had recently purchased a lot, were comparing builders, closer to retirement and "ready to start a home."

"We also probably had 20-25 people who came back a second time over the weekend," she said. "They are waiting to get to a comfortable place and ready to pull the trigger."

The home showcase produced two home reservations," Kerper said, adding they are ready to build on one other site.

The company has bought about 100 sites in the Cape, many on fresh and saltwater canals.

Turn Key Homes' brand is affordable homes from \$299,000 to \$499,000, ranging from 2,300 to 2,900 square feet. Its model in the parade, called Bella, is just under 2,700 square feet.

"We are working on price changes and options," Kerper said. "We have a unique combination of very seasoned professionals. Although we are small, we are mighty."

Koogler said about 35 percent of the people touring his 4,400-square-foot model, called the Veneto, were from Canada. He said approximately 60 percent of the people were probably from outside the Cape.

"The comments I was hearing were 'we can't make money anywhere else so let's gamble and put it in a home,'" Koogler said.

Koogler builds high-end homes. The model has a price tag of \$2.3 million. The homes he sold were between \$1 million and \$4 million.

“We have a very good name for what we do,” Koogler said.

Koogler has been in the Cape for 16 years, recently celebrating its 10th anniversary under the current name. It was known as Gulfstream Homes before that.

Koogler said he plans to have two less expensive homes between 2,700 and 2,900 square feet in the coming Cape Coral Construction Industry Association’s Builders Showcase, which is March 9-11 and March 16-18.

Builders are confident the real estate market is picking up after 89 new homes were sold in the Cape in 2010 and 88 last year, according to MLS listings. So far, 12 new homes have been sold this year.

Other builders who had model homes in the Cape and were among the 37 homes in the LBIA show were Paul Homes, Team Aubuchon, Arnold Roberts Signature Homes, PGI Homes, Tracey Quality Builders, D.R. Horton, Celebration Cape, Community Home, Hammer Commercial Services and Tradewind Estate Homes.

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