


Builder/Architect

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A photograph of two men standing in a room. The man on the left is wearing a dark suit and tie. The man on the right is wearing a light-colored, patterned blazer over a brown shirt. In the background, there is a framed picture of a chalice on a wall and a window with a decorative arch.

Norman S. Cohen and
Howard A. Zuckerman

Camelot/Signature Development, LLC
Turning Dreams into Reality

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By Amy Meadows

Baby boomers aren't just baby boomers anymore. They are "active adults" and a continually growing sector of the home buyer market that developers are beginning to notice. One company, however, already has tapped into the potential provided by the active adult community and is finding great success. With a quality product and a systems-oriented approach, Camelot/Signature Development, LLC is emerging as a company that can make its clients' dreams come true.

"The condominium market has

gone through an evolution," explains Howard A. Zuckerman, a principal of the company along with his partner, Norman S. Cohen.

"The dynamics of the condominium market are different today from what they were in the 1970s and 1980s. Now people understand the concept more—condominium living is a different lifestyle." Camelot/Signature undoubtedly understands the appeal of the concept, concentrating on developing single-level condominium communities that boast maintenance-free exteriors and open, airy interiors

ranging from 1,300 to 1,700 square feet. The company works in Cobb and Cherokee counties with Settlers Walk and Settlers Trail in West Cobb and Stonegate at BridgeMill in Cherokee's sizeable master-planned community.

Cohen reveals, "We have a dual sell for our communities. We have to convince people that condominium living is the way they should go and that our product is the product they should be buying." Of course, the Zuckerman and Cohen team is up to the challenge. With a combined 50 years in the

The entrance to Stonegate of BridgeMill includes an elegant sign, designed and produced by Signs Limited in Marietta, GA. Photo by Bill Gornto Photography.





Above: Piedmont Executive Center office condominium complex, located in Cobb County. Photo by Bill Gornto Photography.

Right: Stonegate model with custom bookcases and vaulted ceilings. Photo by Bill Gornto Photography.

home building industry and a breadth of experience in an array of development areas, the men partnered in 2000 to begin the Camelot/Signature venture. They have divided responsibilities—Zuckerman handles the financial and land acquisitions part of the business and Cohen deals with the construction and marketing concerns—but share equal understanding of their market and their product. They understand that older, active adults are seeking a lifestyle that allows them to be released from the responsibilities of home ownership but also to enjoy the advantages of it at a reasonable price. Therefore, Camelot/Signature's condo units range from the \$140s to the \$210s, depending on size and



location, and provide customers with a plethora of features and options.

"I like to call it 'lock it and leave it,'" explains Zuckerman. "You can lock it, go on vacation for a month, come back, and everything is the same." Cohen continues, "Some of our buyers are people who have two homes and want to keep a presence in the Atlanta area. They can be confident that when they leave, it's in a professionally maintained community where when they come back after being gone for 30 days, the grass is going to be cut and the shrubs are going to be trimmed." Interior repairs and improvements are the responsibility of the homeowner, but the ease afforded by the condominium lifestyle seamlessly offsets any other household issues.

Home buyers are not the only ones who must—and do—recognize the advantages of condo living. As each new Camelot/Signa-



Above: Stonegate exterior. Masonry supplied by Forsyth Masonry in Cumming, GA. Photo by Bill Gornto Photography.



Left: Living room, dining room and kitchen in the Settlers Walk condominium. Carpet installed by Atlanta Carpet Center, Inc. in Woodstock, GA. Photo by Bill Gornto Photography.

ture project is treated as a separate limited liability corporation, investors are an important part of the development process for Cohen and Zuckerman. Each land acquisition is structured to benefit all parties involved, and the Camelot/Signature principals want to ensure that their partners benefit from the deals. This means making sure that systems are instituted to streamline the construction process and that budgets are met as estimated. With a support staff that includes experienced superintendents, salespeople, accounting personnel and a full-time land acquisition employee, the company exceeds expectations. "We have a fiduciary responsibility to our partners to see that all costs

are controlled and there are no crossovers," clarifies Cohen. "I think that one of the keys to our profitability is our cost control; we don't like surprises, and we don't like our investors or homeowners to have surprises." With three floorplans that are priced out to 90 different line items and a dozen contingency items, all construction aspects of each job usually are bought out with purchase orders before the company breaks ground. This process minimizes questions and alleviates investors' concerns in advance.

Zuckerman and Cohen also take buyers' concerns very seriously. To help educate their customers, they provide a home care systems manual when someone contracts with them. "It gives them all the information about the home, includ-

ing the warranty book," Zuckerman says. "We have a list of the 20 most asked questions about condominiums so there are no surprises. What we're trying to do is take all of the guesswork out of what is going to happen. If we give them the manual, we've answered most of their questions on day one." Cohen continues, "We try to set the customer's expectations of ownership. An educated buyer is always easier to deal with because you're dealing with facts and not fears."

Another way to help educate customers is through the use of educated, on-site agents who are dedicated to selling Camelot/Signature's communities. All of the company's agents are licensed real estate agents and are taught about the ins and outs of condominium living.

According to Zuckerman, "We sit our agents down with the attorney who drafts the documents to ask any questions, we sit them down with the mortgage people, we sit them down with the insurance professionals so they understand how the insurance works in a condominium, we walk through the community with the construction supervisors so they understand how that is done." The knowledge the agents receive gives them the ability to be committed to selling the condominium lifestyle as well as the product, which, for Zuckerman and Cohen, is a constantly evolving entity.

"We're now in the process of developing a second generation of the product that will encompass all of the things we've learned," states Cohen. This means that simple modifications will be introduced into the already impressive homes that include nine-foot smooth-finish ceilings, vaulted living room ceilings, two-car attached garages, extensive brick exteriors, and more. As always, however, proven materials will be used to construct the condos and to ensure that there are limited customer callbacks or warranty issues. Finally, home buyers, as they can today, will be able to make selections based on their wishes and needs. The end result, as Zuckerman jokes, merely will be "Camelot/Signature's Version 2.0."

In the future, Zuckerman and Cohen expect to continue to develop between three and five communities per year. "We don't want to be the biggest developer in Atlanta," Zuckerman discloses. Cohen finishes the thought by stating, "We simply want to develop small, quality communities and have control over cost and quality." With three residential communities currently in development and one office condominium park also in their repertoire, it seems that their goals are within reach. The team also may turn its sights to townhouses and cluster



Exterior of Stonegate model. Landscaping installed by Pickett's Mill Nursery, which can be reached at (770) 941-8002. Photo by Bill Gornito Photography.

homes within Atlanta and outside of the state if the appropriate opportunities should arise. Of course, Zuckerman and Cohen always have their outside interests to keep them busy; Cohen is a national director of the National Association of Home Builders and sits on three national committees, and Zuckerman is the author of numerous real estate books and newsletters.

It seems that Howard Zuckerman and Norman Cohen truly are in the business of dreams—their customers' dreams, their investors' dreams and their own dreams. And since "Camelot" is defined as a place of idealized beauty and peace and a "Signature" is described as a distinctive mark or characteristic, it appears that the combined name of their company perfectly represents it. Camelot/Signature Development, LLC unquestionably transforms its clients' dreams into reality by providing a signature product that allows customers to feel like they are in their very own kingdoms.

For more information about Camelot/Signature Development, LLC, please visit www.camelotsignature.com.

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Settlers Walk cozy owner's suite with tray ceiling. Photo by Bill Gornto Photography.

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