

What Makes A Successful MPC?

Great lifestyle oriented amenities make a successful master planned community (“MPC”). The three most important factors for developing a MPC are no longer the time-honored dictum of location, location, location. For a MPC located on the urban fringe, there is another, more modern mantra ... lifestyle, lifestyle, lifestyle and it’s winning homebuyers over. Activity oriented amenities and programs have become the focal point of homebuyers’ lives.

Creating a sense of community through recreational amenities and programming allows a MPC to sell lifestyle, rather than just homes. The focus of suburban housing is shifting to communities that provide a lifestyle that families can enjoy together. Homebuyers are demanding character-filled places to live, interesting outdoor locations to explore, and opportunities for interaction.

Rancho Sahuarita is a 3,000-acre MPC, with zoning for over 11,000 homes and a variety of commercial uses. Rancho Sahuarita was originally positioned to be the most highly amenitized community, with the best housing value, in southern Arizona, and it continues to get better with age. Rancho Sahuarita utilized amenities to “jump start” its sense of community, establish a momentum for success, and increase values. By accelerating the perception that the community was mature and had an established sense of place, Rancho Sahuarita was able to increase its sales pace and housing and land values earlier in the sales process and create a competitive advantage.

Introducing a continual stream of new amenities and programming has transformed Rancho Sahuarita into Southern Arizona’s most unique residential destination. With about a 6% market share, Rancho Sahuarita sold almost 500 homes last year, making it one of the top 11, best selling MPCs in the country.

The superior positioning of this community through extensive amenities has also mitigated the long-term risks of the builders who have purchased over 5,000 lots there in the last six years. As the market has cooled, Rancho Sahuarita’s market share has increased due the confidence that homebuyers have in its brand and the value and momentum of the community.

Rancho Sahuarita’s \$40 million amenity package establishes an identity and central theme for the project, and helps create a sense of community and a higher quality of life for its residents. The community-wide park system emphasizes distinctive gathering places, like a Safari Trail, Doggie Park and Desert and Butterfly Gardens. Open space, parks or recreation areas with pools are incorporated into each neighborhood and connected by miles of paved paths.

These family oriented amenities add value from the viewpoint of prospects and establish Rancho Sahuarita as a one-of-a-kind, year-around destination. Rancho Sahuarita offers on-site schools, a fifteen-acre lake park and three clubhouses, one which features a splash park for younger families, and one for each of its two active adult communities. All of the facilities are staffed with full time activity directors who coordinate clubs and classes.

The monuments, walls, and buildings create a continual sense of arrival and security for the community and its individual neighborhoods. This planned environment also integrates architectural style as an amenity by re-creating a motif that reflects a 17th century Spanish Colonial Disneyland. This theme captures the authenticity of the southwestern heritage while remaining whimsical enough to be unique.

Rancho Sahuarita has also created a strong sense of community through its fun-filled, event-full lifestyle. There are the seasonal public events plus dozens of themed parties and family events reserved exclusively for the residents. This exceptional lifestyle has created a competitive advantage that translates into over 35% of Rancho Sahuarita's home sales resulting from referrals by existing residents.

In addition to offering the area's most distinctive amenities and activities, Rancho Sahuarita was envisioned as a total community, which would include convenient employment, shopping, dining, and educational, medical, and cultural opportunities. With almost 3,500 homes already sold, Rancho Sahuarita is beginning to attract interest from retailers and other service providers.

Neighborhood shopping is already underway, with *The Rancho Sahuarita Marketplace*, featuring a *108,000 sq.ft. Fry's Marketplace* and an additional 35,000 square feet of shops and service tenants, scheduled to open by the end of the year. In addition, based on demand from large-format national retailers, initial planning for the development of a regional "power center," to be located on the southwest corner of I-19 and Sahuarita Road, was recently started.

Rancho Sahuarita is also creating an enduring sense of community and place by planning a vibrant Town Center, anchored by an "old fashion" main street and a mix of uses including commercial, residential, and recreational. There is even a 62,000 sq. ft. Town of Sahuarita municipal headquarters, that is currently under construction, and Carondelet Health Network recently purchased land in this area to build a new hospital and medical office complex, beginning in 2010.

The Rancho Sahuarita lifestyle is designed to provide families a high-end, luxury resort experience at a reasonable price. The quality and cost of life at Rancho Sahuarita differentiates it from all other communities, providing a marketing edge and increasing absorption. Rancho Sahuarita's success confirms that great lifestyle oriented amenities are not only desirable, but also contribute to the buyer perception that homes, within this community, will hold their value better. By initially offering lifestyle, lifestyle, lifestyle, Rancho Sahuarita has achieved the advantages often associated with location, location, location.