

Valley Estates Subdivision Offering Affordable Building Lots

By Lisa Davis-Burnett

Not much in real estate these days can be termed affordable. This is especially true in the limited space and highly valued terrains of a small, tropical island. But the latest project of the Independent Consulting Engineers (ICE) is one that promises to be within the reach of working families. The Valley Estates Subdivision is entering phase two of its development plan, which means the early lots are ready for purchase and development by home owners. The good news is that the prices of these lots are within the budgets of most of us and the infrastructure is fully provided in terms of road access, water, electricity, cable TV, telephone, security systems and street lighting.

With hillsides being developed all across the island, often resulting in massive run-off obstructing roadways and damaging downhill property after even a moderate rainstorm, it is comforting to see the planning, engineering and care being devoted to the Valley Estates Subdivision. The slope on the hill just east of Ebenezer

is a moderate one, with stable rock underlying. In a visit with *WEEKENDER*, Jan vanden Eynde of ICE took the time to point out how the lots are to be designed so as not to allow excavations to destabilize the slope for the next lot, a problem that sometimes occurs when development is done piecemeal. Trees and other natural vegetation are to be left in place as much as possible and the entire area is 40-50 % green, in other words not paved, or built upon. The sides of the roadways and a park area will be landscaped with local flowering plants, with guidance from Reuben Thompson of Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC).

A MAJOR CONCERN for the engineers was drainage. To ensure the development does not add to the run-off burden of the Ebenezer-St. Peters area, the natural drainage pattern was studied. Five separate channels are being constructed to funnel water off the hills. In addition, the main conduit, originally built in the 1980s, is being deepened and reinforced. Vanden Eynde stated that the system is built to accommodate the run-off associated with a major downpour, what engineers call a ten-year storm. The plan is simple: slow the water down, allow it to sink in. To this end, they have drainage channels with baffles and rough surfaces. That, together with the high percentage of green spaces will keep the rain from flooding into roadways and homes.

The development is in accor-

dance with VROM requirements and the Hillside policy, and will preserve some of the original feel of the natural area. The company believes that, with this new development, it is building on its reputation. Already to its credit, the Almond Grove Estate Subdivision in Cole Bay is an example of a project that has lived up to its plan to be a middle-to-high end residence with a secure feel and plenty of green spaces. It has maintained strict regulations about boundaries, heights of buildings, percentage of green in the subdivision. Vanden Eynde understatedly commented, "We want to use Almond Grove as our example, because I think we didn't do a bad job over there."

THERE ARE a few differences of course, between the two projects, namely the pricing points. "The philosophy of the project is that we want to offer an upscale product at a lower scale price level. Typically the project is geared toward the local public. Many who have bought the lots are not the kind of people that can afford to buy in Almond Grove, Pelican Key or Dawn Beach."

Lots are available in sizes perfect for a single family home, with some lots having the potential for a small apartment or guest house to be included. There are 175 lots available in total, though some have already been sold. The sizes range from 700 to 2,000 square metres, with prices ranging from US \$70,000 to 130,000. There will be strict controls regarding construction, such as a maximum level of two stories, adequate parking spaces on the lot, and



Jan vanden Eynde of ICE looks on at the progress being made on the roads and drainage system for phase 2 of the Valley Estates project.



Lot 63 stands ready for development.

maintenance of at least 50% of the total lot area to be green spaces. Vanden Eynde noted that the community will have full infrastructure and be gated, but they are still working out the details of how the gate will operate.

While some may be concerned about the added traffic in the area, new roads are being planned to relieve some of the congestion. Link Six has been planned for several years, and negotiations with property owners is in the works. Eventually the road will connect Ebenezer to Dutch Quarter via Weymouth Hill. Admittedly, this has been on the books since the early 1990s, however, recently progress has been noted. A few years down the road, the situation with traffic could be quite different.

SO FAR the lots have been moving quite well. There are people who have bought land for their

children to have once they are ready to start making their own way. Vanden Eynde: "I think we are at a very interesting price level, there is nothing comparable for the same price on the island I am sure. You may find pieces of land for the same price or even cheaper, but you will basically just get a piece of bush where you would have to wait to see what may happen... if ever. We are building, its happening."

For more information on the Valley Estates Subdivision, contact Independent Consulting Engineers at 542-2421 or send email to icesxm@sintmaarten.net. Information is also available at these affiliated Real Estate Agents: Mr. Leopold Gumbs of Euro Caribbean Linkup, 542-5551 or Mr. Edgar Lynch of Arlyn Consultants, 547-2588. French side residents can contact Ms. Gerladine Ciccione at 0590-2911717.



A view of the Hillside to be developed for housing lots with complete infrastructure.

INSIDE



3 Archaeologist Julian Money

2 Commentaries/ Best Seller List

4 Will Johnson on The Mail Service of long ago

6 Walter Hellebrand on Mr. Lampe

8 Easy Access for your PC

9 SXM Week in Review

10 Crossword Puzzle

11 Church News/Brenda's Corner

11 Business Week in Review

12 Let's Travel to China