

HOME BUYING GUIDE

Third home's a charm for family in Inverness

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After moving twice in the past seven years, Jennifer Andersen-Smith and her husband, Don, knew exactly what they were looking for in their third new home: new construction and a good school district for their two young children.

Relocating from California for Don's job, the couple did research to narrow their choices on new homes.

They zeroed in on Meritus Homes' Creekside at Inverness Ridge, a gated development of 27 estate-style, single-family homes in Inverness.

"My husband was the first to visit the community and knew with its location within Barrington School District 220 and beautiful homes that it would be perfect for us," Andersen-Smith said.

Creekside at Inverness Ridge is surrounded by mature trees and conservation areas, which also played a part in the couple's decision-making.

"Our home overlooks trees and natural areas, which we love. And the fact that it's maintenance-free is certainly a perk for us, since we're both so busy with work and family," Andersen-Smith said.

The Smiths chose the 3,716-square-foot Dunberry plan, with four bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths and a split-bay three-car garage. The plan is priced from \$554,900.

"We are so happy with the way our home turned out, from the classic Tudor-style exterior to the gourmet kitchen, which is definitely my favorite room in the house," Andersen-Smith said.

The kitchen features high-end standard finishes such as hardwood flooring, granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, 42-inch cabinetry, a pantry, double ovens and a preparation island.

"And then there are the features we didn't even know we'd love, like the split staircase that gives me direct access from upstairs to the kitchen and laundry room," Andersen-Smith said.

The children favor the Jack-and-Jill bathroom connecting their bedrooms. "They think it's so much fun to run back and forth to each other's room," Andersen-Smith said.

But the feature that has gotten the most use since the family moved in this summer is the guest suite.

"We have family and friends from all over the world, so we have a lot of overnight guests. In fact, we had company the very first night in our home, and all our guests have appreciated the private bath attached to the bedroom," Andersen-Smith said.

Builder overview

Meritus Homes was founded by husband-and-wife team Brian and Karen Brunhofer, who were Chicago division presidents for Pulte Homes.

Buyers can choose from five floor plans at Creekside at Inverness Ridge, including two ranch, one two-story design with a first-floor master suite and two traditional two-story plans. Homes range from 2,610 to 3,716 square feet and feature three to four bedrooms, 2 to 3 1/2 baths, full basements, and attached two- or three-car garages. Pricing starts at \$498,900.

A monthly assessment covers landscaping and snow removal, plus maintenance of a conservation area and walking path. The development's streets are private and owned by the homeowner association.

For more information, call 847-381-0725 or visit meritushomebuilders.com.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/classified/realestate/buy/ct-home-0106-buyer-profile-20120105,0,4555180.story>

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