

Family’s former farm being converted to villas in Troy

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

An old family farm in Troy is being converted to senior living villas and now has its first resident.

The project known as Serenade was the subject of open houses in October. The site is going up behind the Walgreen’s store on the south side of Illinois Route 162, with access from both Dorothy Drive and Bradley Smith Drive. The infrastructure is in place for about half the 35-acre development.

Two duplexes are now complete, and each has two villas. Each villa is being sold at a base price of \$289,900, said Merrill Ottwein, on whose former family farm the project is being built. He also holds the realty listing. The first unit was sold recently. The contractor and owner of the project is Lynn Sill of Petersburg, Ill.

“The project is customized for people 55-plus living,” Ottwein said. “There are no basements, there is easy entry, flat floors, and most remarkably, concrete walls.”

The Styrofoam-insulated concrete walls



are an energy efficient approach that has not been used much in the Metro East area, he said. The duplexes are divided by a common wall, also concrete. The walls are an alternative building process known as ICF (for Insulated Concrete Formed.)

With reinforcing steel added, the process creates a unitized monolithic “sandwich” of concrete, with 2.5 inches of foam on both sides. Drywall can be directly applied on the inside and all kinds of siding applied directly on the outside. All openings through the walls, such as windows, doors and utility-ways need to be anticipated.

The walls withstand fires, winds and

the elements better than traditional home construction, he said.

The buildings are to be built in clusters that will face each other with a common access courtyard, allowing for people to mix as they wish.

“That’s designed to give people a sense of neighborhood,” Ottwein said.

Some 62 villas are anticipated in all, in both two- and three-bedroom options. The overall floor space is 1,800 square feet in both options.

“The base price per square foot is right at \$161 per foot, among the lowest in new homes in the area. There is a huge list of upgrades included as standard, too, so it appears to be a neat value and a lot of upgraded home for the money,” Ottwein said.

That list is posted on the website, villasatserenade.com, and available on request.

The project has been in the works for the last few years and Ottwein said part of the delay was simply finding the right builder, one who has worked with the unique concrete wall construction.

“The technique is catching on in churches and schools, by presenting a periphery that’s like a fort,” he said. “The Assembly of God is big on it nationwide. You can’t blow it down, it’s quieter inside.”

And the energy efficiency is fairly remarkable. Ottwein said the structures, when unoccupied, require no energy and save about 60 percent on the traditional power bill, according to manufacturers.

The development is named “Serenade” because of the musical interests of the farm’s owners, represented by Merrill Ottwein and his wife, Grace, and Merrill’s sister, Audrey Deeren.

The old family farm is alongside Tri Township Park.

For more information, people can call Ottwein, who is the listing agent, at (618) 781-1822 or his email at merrill@homerejo.com; or contact the builder directly, Lynn Sill, at (217) 801-2516.

City to add learning facilities at its Watershed Nature Center

In early November, the city of Edwardsville and the Nature Preserve Foundation, the organization that manages the Watershed Nature Center, will begin construction on the biggest park improvement project in the center’s history.

Designed to enable more hands-on, experiential learning and discovery at the Watershed Nature Center, the Access Nature project concept took root in 2016 as a way to ensure the center continued to grow as a popular nature destination in the Metro East.

The Access Nature project comprises a new shoreline classroom, educational meadow, demonstration gardens, a nature

play area, and new wayfinding and interpretive signage, among other amenities.

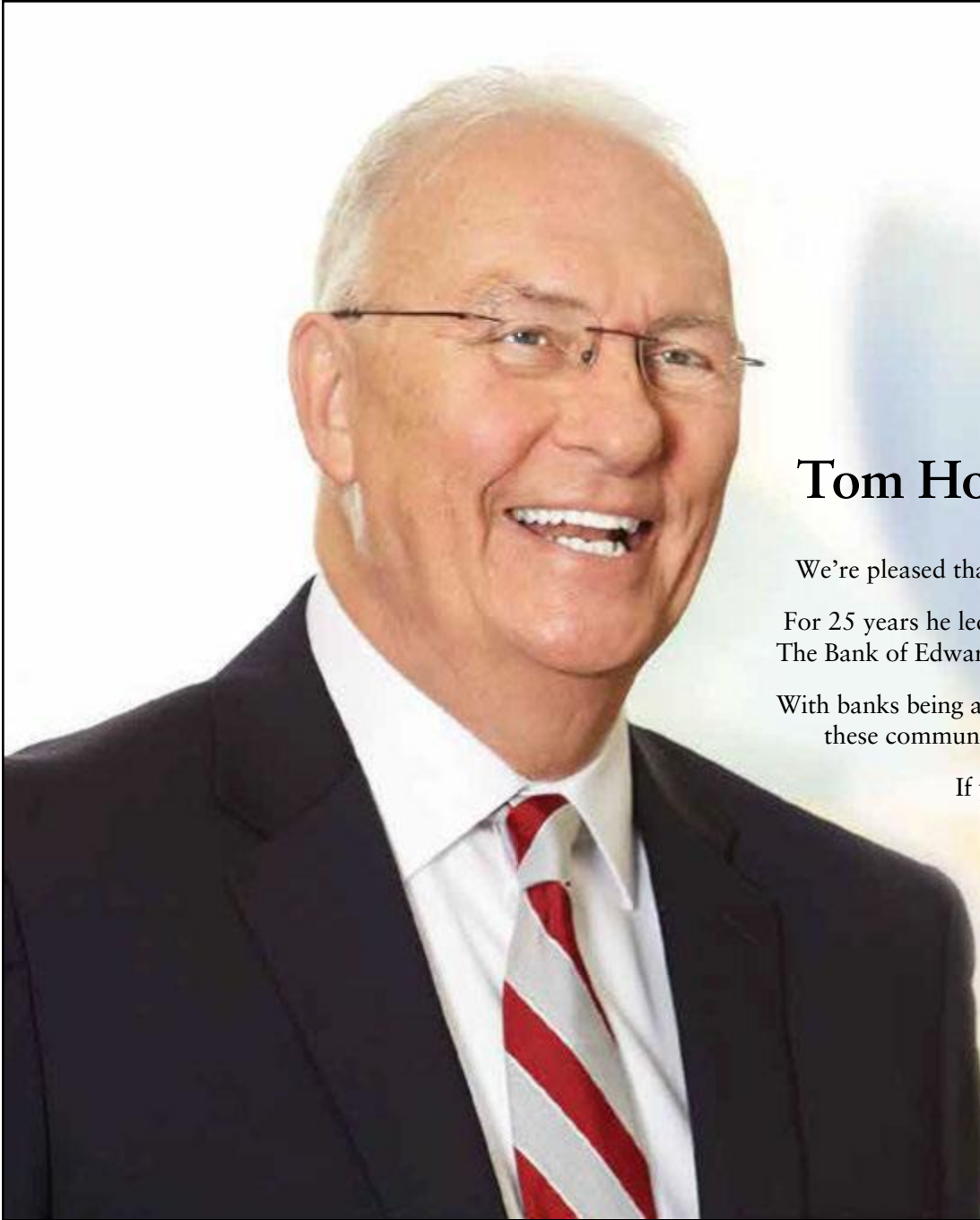
Generous contributions and grants have made the improvements possible, with an anticipated project cost totaling more than \$450,000. Current donors include Phillips 66, Edwardsville Community Foundation, Edwardsville Rotary Club, Junior Service Club of Edwardsville/Glen Carbon, and various individuals. The project is also a recipient of a Park and Trail Matching Grant from the Metro East Park and Recreation District.

“For the past three decades, the Watershed Nature Center has grown in lots of ways,” said Sheila Voss, president of the board

of directors for the Nature Preserve Foundation. “Its wetland, woodland, and grassland habitats have been managed in ways that enable wildlife to survive and thrive here. And its trail system enables visitors easy and safe access to nature in an urban setting. But we saw a need to increase that access even more, inviting more people to benefit from the center’s nature-rich environment.”

“It’s been very rewarding to work with the Watershed team this past year to get the Access Nature project to the final construction phase,” he said. “There have been some obstacles, but when all involved believe in the project and the impact it will have, it makes it worth it. We all believe in the restorative impacts the Watershed has on visitors. It’s an incredible property that is a testament to the restoration efforts of the city, the parks department, and the Nature Preserve Foundation.”

Between now and year’s end, interested donors can purchase recognition pavers that will become part of a welcome pavilion in front of the Visitor Center building. More information about the pavers as well as other opportunities to support the Watershed Nature Center can be found at <http://www.watershednaturecenter.org/> or by calling (618) 692-7578. Sponsorship opportunities are still available at varying levels.



Tom Holloway joins Carrollton Bank

We’re pleased that Tom has chosen to continue his banking career.

For 25 years he led Madison and St. Clair Counties’ leading local banks—The Bank of Edwardsville (now Busey) and Magna Bank (now Regions).

With banks being acquired, Carrollton is being asked to fulfill a larger role in these communities. We’re grateful Tom will help serve those growing groups.

If you’d like to join us in welcoming him, please give him a call at 618-789-4286.

CARROLLTON BANK