

## Talking Rock

Written by David M. Brown

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**Two new home styles at Talking Rock in Prescott are building on the community's commitment to environmental sustainability.**



Western Legends, a partnership between Prescott's Mom's Custom Homes and Everwood Design in Phoenix, and the Lone Spur Collection, designed and built by Payson's TRD&B, are new offerings by the luxury golf community — smaller, more affordable, high-quality homes with a variety of energy-saving components.

"Builders are responding to changes in the market," says Jim Jones, director of sales for the 3,500-acre golf community, about an hour and a half north of Phoenix. Since opening in 2001, Talking Rock, developed by Scottsdale-based Harvard Investments, has offered home sites and custom homes as well as a variety of ranch-style floor plans consistent with the mountain lifestyle.

With 1,000 acres of preserved open space, the high-country community features a Jay Morrish-designed 7,350-yard championship golf course, managed by OB Sports. Using a high percentage of reclaimed effluent for irrigation, the course is the first in Arizona recognized for compliance with the Environmental Principles of Golf, which sets thresholds for turf care, water use and other course practices.

In addition, its Ranch Compound, the community center, incorporates resource-conservation products such as motion-detecting low-flow faucets in the bathrooms, light sensors and timers and low-flow dual-flush toilets.

The new home styles reaffirm this community greening: "At Talking Rock, people are downsizing because of the economy, for sure, but also because of a concern for energy conservation and a focus on healthy living," Jones explains. "Our buyers want affordability, a streamlined building process and maximum value."

He adds: "Our participating builders, like Mom's and TRD&B, are responding with floor plans that are more energy efficient and cost efficient. They're maximizing home's solar orientation for better passive warming, offering more extensive patios to expand square footage outside, using more energy-efficient materials, better insulation packages and solar technologies."

Ranging from 2,500 to just under 3,000 square feet, Western Legends offers semi-custom ranch homes with five floor plans celebrating Arizona Native American tribes — Awatobi, Havasupai, Papago, Cocopah and Yavapai. These homes are \$500,000 to \$600,000 and built on the buyers' home sites.

In addition to a variety of standards, the homes incorporate environmental features such as low-pitched wide overhanging roofs, wrap-around porches, heavy textured integrated materials, insulation values exceeding codes and ordinances in the walls, roofs and around ductwork and high-efficiency 13 SEER air-conditioning units.

Hal Lobough and Steve Reiland, owners of Mom's Custom Homes, explain that the Gale OPTIMA blown-in fiber insulation achieves R-23 in the 2'-by-6' construction used in the homes. "It has no gaps or voids, no chemicals to corrode pipes or create noxious odors and does not absorb or retain moisture, avoiding rot and decay," he says.

They are particularly proud of the company's exclusive use of lumber from the MSR Lumber Producers Council, which guarantees that all pieces are evaluated for stiffness and strength and monitored by a third party before shipping. "This might seem less important than other green aspects, but the value predictability of MSR Lumber reduces construction-site wastage, which has traditionally added to costs, environmental and otherwise."

Ed Felix, principal designer for Everwood, notes that buyers can upgrade to even higher insulation values, higher efficiency equipment and appliances and that Mom's Custom Homes is considering ENERGY STAR compliance as an option. A program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy, ENERGY STAR homes are more efficient than similar new-builds, thereby decreasing the need for new power plants, lowering reliance on foreign oil and reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants.



Felix notes: "As much as we would prefer to design using only high-efficiency systems and building materials, it still isn't quite practical yet. Homeowners, and their budgets, will decide how much more efficient and green a design will be beyond that of what's required."

Similarly, with rustic floor plans from the mid-\$400,000s to just under \$500,000, the Lone Spur Collection has features typically found in custom

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home designs, such as alder, hickory or knotty oak cabinets, granite countertops and propane fireplaces with native stone facing.

Eco-friendly design elements include continuous insulation wrapped on all exterior walls to resist moisture and wind, Anderson series 200 Low E dual-pane windows and patio doors, highly efficient electric heat and cooling pumps, energy-efficient water heaters and furnaces, low-maintenance fiber cement siding and trim and solar water heaters.

With the additional blown insulation, the exterior house walls are R-22, and the ceilings are R-38, explains Steve Iverson, vice president of construction for TRD&B. He adds that the vaulted ceilings in the great rooms have structural insulated panels with closed cell foam, producing R-40.

Roger and Judy Egan are working with Mom's Custom Homes on their 3,900-square-foot home, which incorporates many of these eco-friendly elements and others. They have worked closely as well with Talking Rock's architectural committee and their construction and development head, Clint Poteet.

"Judy and I felt in this day and age it would be foolish to build a beautiful house without incorporating as many green components and energy efficiency into the house as possible within a reasonable expense structure," says Roger, a New England native, Vietnam War veteran, restaurateur and vineyard owner. Judy, a former bank president, has lived in Arizona for more than 50 years.

For example, they've added propane usage to their utility system, adding to a combination of power sources to maximize efficiency and reduce cost. In addition, they are installing the latest energy-saving windows and doors as well as maximum insulation and underground cisterns to capture rainwater for recycling.

Inside, the Egans will be using a natural materials such as bamboo, cork, and slate, recycled carpet with low gas emission and, wherever possible, fluorescent and LED lighting systems.

"The Talking Rock staff couldn't be better," says Roger, who expects that he and Judy will move into their home about nine months from now. "The solutions we've come up with will hopefully create some new guidelines for energy conservation — moving forward in the true spirit of the Talking Rock Community."

For more on the community, see [www.talkingrockranch.com](http://www.talkingrockranch.com).