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Coast: Simple design elements help townhomes face winter tempests

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By GAYLE H. KAROL

HOMES & REAL ESTATE EDITOR

Winter weather conditions on Oregon's north coast present a remarkably reliable litmus test for the beach home buyer: If you can stand facing the wind on Neahkahnie Mountain or watch for whales from Cape Lookout on a stormy day in January, you've got the right salt.

Weather is one of the abiding attractions that entices vacation- and year-round-home buyers to the coastal bays of Clatsop and northern Tillamook counties. Another is privacy: You have to want to get there, because much of scenic Oregon Highway 101 veers inland along that section of the coast.

A third attraction just might be timing. This winter, some prime properties have reduced their prices, designed special deals or added new financing to boost winter sales.

Two new-home developments in the area -- Holly Heights at Netarts, and Nehalem Point, south of Manzanita at Nehalem -- claim nature and privacy as precious amenities for those who answer a coastal call.

Holly Heights

Perched on a hilltop with views of Cape Lookout, Netarts Bay and the Pacific Ocean, Holly Heights was built to respect sudden changes in the weather.

"We face due south, and the weather comes right up on us,"

said Holly Bates, co-developer of the project with her husband, builder Todd Bates. To withstand the wind, Bates built the paired townhome units with hip roofs on the south side. The idea was borrowed from Florida builders who found hip roofs withstand hurricane force winds better than pitched roofs with overhanging eaves.

"We can get a pretty good storm up here," Holly Bates said, "but one of our owners who retired from Intel is always telling us he's amazed at how tight his home is."

Simple design works best at the coast, Bates said. "If you have a lot of alcoves and dormers, that's where you can get into trouble with leaks."

The Bates specified dimensional composite roofing, cedar shingles, and vinyl-clad windows and doors to endure the climate. For their hilltop location, they incorporated a drainage plan that satisfied stringent zoning requirements required by Tillamook County.

Five town homes are currently available, each about 1,900 square feet and priced between \$250,000 and \$269,000. Eight more homes are planned, for a total of 18.

The small size of the development befits the cozy feel the Bates put into the interiors of each residence. The three-bedroom, 2.5-bath homes have hardwood floors, tumbled marble finishes in the bathrooms and a two-person tub or shower in each master bath.

Other features include custom interior and exterior light fixtures, raised panel doors, living room pellet stoves and built-in decorator shelves. Outside, there are private decks and drives, and brick detailing. On the ocean side of the homes, there's natural open space; in front, a common area.

New this winter is a shared equity purchase option, available for buyers on more limited budgets.

A one-fifth share of each home can be bought for \$69,000, including furnishings. The purchased share has the same tax privileges as a vacation or second home and can be included in estates and wills.

Shared equity programs are a way to buy sooner rather than later, Bates said. "Last summer, we had many inquiries about this sort of financing, but we didn't have it in place yet."

The shared equity plan gives a buyer 10 weeks of time in the

The shared equity plan gives a buyer 10 weeks of time in the residence, and that time rotates around the calendar, said Realtor Dennis Meadows of Coldwell Banker in Vancouver, who handles Holly Heights sales.

Owners can also purchase two or more shares.

"The people who find us want something off the beaten path," said Holly Bates of those who arrive at Holly Heights. "They want to avoid the crowds and tourism at Cannon Beach and Lincoln City, and here they have their privacy."

Nehalem Point

Respect for privacy -- people's and nature's -- also characterizes the philosophy at Nehalem Point, a lush development on a spit studded with spruce, fir, hemlock, huckleberry and sea grasses across the Nehalem River from Oregon 101 just south of Manzanita. The pristine parcel was once earmarked for 240 home sites and a commercial center by the city of Nehalem before an investment partnership from Portland revised its future.

Nehalem Point Inc. President Darryl Carter and his partners found the peninsula untouched, with the Nehalem Bay estuary on two sides and a mile of Nehalem River frontage on a third. A veritable wildlife sanctuary marks the property's western boundary, and Nehalem Bay State Park and the Pacific Ocean are next door.

Working with Portland architect Michael McCulloch, WaterLeaf Architecture & Interiors, the developers re-platted the 220-acre secluded site, preserving 150 acres as open green space and master-planning a gated community with 41 homesites that easily blend into the beauty.

"This is a place where you can relax, watch the fog roll in, trace the elk across the marsh, fish the Nehalem and restore your faith in the balance of man and nature," McCulloch wrote in describing the site.

Prices start at \$69,950 and range to \$139,500 for the 34 remaining lots available in the first phase. Developer Carter said the property will remain practically unchanged on three sides. A future phase will be platted only on the south end, where the peninsula protrudes into the west end of the bay.

So arresting is the site and a recently completed house McCulloch designed as Nehalem Point's model that it attracted producers at HGTV, who selected it for the cable television

channel's 4th Annual Dream House Giveaway (see related story, Page H1). At the time, only one other house had been built; both were by Portland builder James Frank.

Frank's homes and all houses built at Nehalem Point are subject to plan review, ensuring designs and materials minimize the impact on the natural setting.

One recently completed and approved bargain is a rustic cottage plan starting at less than \$200,000, including land. Designed by Andrew Montgomery, a Portland architect, the modular plan comes with a menu of expandable options. The basic plan has a master suite, fireplace and a loft in 1,200 square feet. The design uses recycled and rustic materials left raw to blend into both natural wooded and open spaces. Details on the menu of options are available from the Nehalem Point sales office (see Resources, Page H2).

Four miles of nature trails meander through the property, affording protected access to plants and animals typical of Oregon's coastal estuaries.

Neahkahnie Mountain, which rises north of Manzanita and was called "place of the fire god" by Native Americans, protects Nehalem Point from harsh weather, according to Carter. When foul conditions loom, he said, the marine fog descends all around the area, but there will be a "hole" of calm just south of the mountain -- making the bay as smooth as a lake.

"They call it the Manzanita doughnut," Carter said.

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