

Article in the NY Times About Foxwood Village

*Note – Photo of Doug Stark erroneously identified as Peter Mastropoala

By DIANA SHAMAN

RISING among the horse ranches and potato farms of Calverton is an unusual, 150-house adult community that may well offer a glimpse of the future, even though it borrows heavily from an old idea.

Douglas Stark and Peter Mastropoala, the developers of Foxwood Village, as the project is called, are selling manufactured houses. But they are retaining ownership of the 52-acre site and leasing out plots to the purchasers of the houses. Foxwood is therefore a mobile-home park — with a difference.

Houses are situated on third-of-an-acre lots, so that the community takes on the same air as any conventional development. But unlike conventional mobile homes, the structures are permanently affixed to crawl spaces or full basements and are separately assessed so that owners pay their own taxes on the buildings.

The developers are offering buyers long-term leases — up to a lifetime. Moreover, Foxwood will have the amenities of a traditional development such as a gatehouse with guards around the clock, a pool, clubhouse and tennis courts.

House owners take care of their own plots of land and driveways, but the developers maintain common areas and roads. Residents — there is a 55-and-over age restriction — initially pay \$225 a month to rent their sites. That fee includes land taxes, water and sewage disposal.

Once the gatehouse is manned and the pool and other amenities are completed later this year, the fee will increase to \$300 a month, but further increases are pegged to increases in the cost of living index. Monthly taxes on each building average \$115.

A two-bedroom, two-bath 1,152-square-foot house sells for a basic price of \$65,921. A three-bedroom, two-bath 1,568-square-foot model is available for \$78,290.

Some lawyers are urging caution, and just 15 homes have been purchased since last April. But those who have moved in are calling the land-leasing arrangement an exciting new concept. "My daughter would give her eyeteeth for something like this, because she can't afford to buy a traditional house," said Joan Gerardi, one of the first buyers at the development.



Installation of a mobile-home section at Foxwood Village in Calverton.

The developers say that the prices of their houses would have to be \$35,000 to \$40,000 higher — the value of each home site — if purchasers were paying for the land and not renting it.

Mr. Stark, who has since 1963 owned and operated Glenwood Village, a well-regarded mobile-home park in Riverhead, said Riverhead has special zoning for mobile-home parks, as do East Hampton and Southampton. Since the land remains under single ownership, he explained, costly subdivision requirements can be bypassed.

Although the term mobile home still conjures up the image of a cigar-shaped trailer, the manufactured houses at Foxwood Village, which can measure as much as 28 feet by 64 feet, look no different from traditional ranches. Prices, with options, can go as high as \$100,000.

Buyers say the Foxwood concept has given them the opportunity to continue living in a detached house more suited to retirement than the large houses they have sold. Typical are the Gerardis and the Wagners.

Mrs. Gerardi and her husband, Edward, a professor of chemistry at Nassau Community College, sold their five-bedroom split-level in Farmingdale to purchase the \$65,000, 1,458-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bath ranch at Foxwood Village. They moved in last April.

"We didn't want to move into a condominium," Mrs. Gerardi said. "We like the pri-

vacuity here, and the bottom line was that it was affordable."

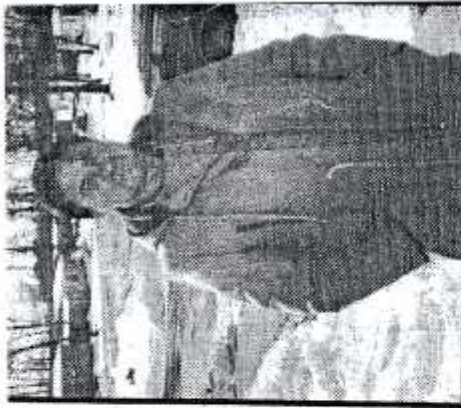
"We like people, but we also like privacy," said Virginia Wagner, who moved to Foxwood with her husband, George, last November, after they sold their three-bedroom split-level in Plainville. Both are retired.

After adding options such as a one-car garage, sliding glass doors, a deck, skylights, and extra appliances, the Wagners paid \$91,000 for their three-bedroom, two bathroom, which had a basic price of \$78,000.

BUT attorneys like Kenneth Rosenblum, a former commissioner of the Suffolk County Department of Consumer Affairs, warn that there are potential hazards for anyone who makes a substantial investment in a structure that is then placed on someone else's land.

"It's a type of life style that many people find congenial," said Mr. Rosenblum, who represents an East Quogue group called the Mobile Home Owners Association. "But people entering into this type of relationship should realize that it entails considerably more risk than tenancy or ownership." He urged that anyone contemplating purchasing a house on rented land seek legal advice to make sure their rights are fully protected.

The landlord-tenant relationship in mobile-home parks has long caused concern among elected officials, because unlike apartment-house tenants, owners of houses placed on



The New York Times/Tony Jerome

Peter Mastropoala at the site.

rented land have a major investment that is jeopardized if they are evicted from their sites.

State Senator Kenneth P. Lavalle, Republican of Centerach, who represents the five eastern Suffolk towns and sections of Brookhaven, and who is sponsor of the Mobile Home Owners Bill of Rights enacted in 1984, said the problem of legislating tenant protection is "a constitutional issue of mandating by law that someone must do something with their property." His measure requires mobile-park owners to give newcomers a one-year lease and the option of two additional one-year leases. But that still provides only temporary protection.

The Foxwood Village developers say their concept eliminates that problem because they are offering residents long-term leases.

But other questions remain. Who owns the basement under the house? What if at some future date the land owners pass rules on to residents? What lease guarantees are available in the event of a resale? What happens if an owner falls behind on rent payments or violates park rules? Currently, they can be evicted within 30 days.

"We are trying to evolve a concept that is still very new and we're trying to make it fair for everyone," Mr. Stark said. "But where else on the island can you buy a house for \$70,000 in an atmosphere that we're offering? If we could offer this to young families, we would sell out overnight."