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UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE ECO-COMMUNITY BREAKS GROUND IN COSTA RICA

—Finca Las Brisas Features Built-in Social and Economic Sustainability—

The owners of Finca Las Brisas [www.FincaLasBrisas.org]*—*an ecologically focused development in the mountains of Costa Rica*—*announce the beginning of Phase II with the groundbreaking for the project's community center.

Located near the Pacific beach community of Samara on the Nicoya Peninsula, Finca Las Brisas has been named as an eco-project to watch by *The Tico Times*, Costa Rica's national newspaper. Upon completion, community members will share more than 150 acres of unspoiled forests, a Pacific Ocean view, year-round rivers with numerous waterfalls, orchards, a vegetable farm, and community center buildings and facilities. The landowner's charter establishes an eco-community combining co-housing (single family homes/shared resources) and sustainable development.

According to Al Benner, majority partner, Finca Las Brisas is a place where environmentally conscious people can not only own property, but also live and vacation in harmony with nature.

"Our model is to integrate, rather than 'gate,'" he explains. "By its very design, Finca Las Brisas eschews the typical model of a planned community, and seeks to seamlessly incorporate every facet of the project with the surrounding population and land."

Benner and his partners have self-funded the development, avoiding potential issues with real estate loans. All 150 acres are paid for in full, and ten of the 24 lots have been sold for both seasonal and year-round residency. The new community center is being funded from lot sales. All roads, trails, vegetable gardens, coffee and fruit orchard plantings are complete, and a supply of pure, solar-pumped well water is currently available. Gardens and fruit trees planted in common areas will provide fruits and vegetables for the residents, separate from the farmed areas. A significant percentage of the property in the river corridor is designated as a no-build zone, protecting the environment, and the investment of each owner.

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“The success we have experienced to date demonstrates the viability of the Costa Rican market, even in a challenging global economic climate,” says Benner. “However, for buyers who are also looking to simplify, de-stress, or reduce living costs, our project makes perfect sense.”

The development, its community gathering places and all of its low impact homes will rely on self-supporting energy, farming and community connections with local people and resources. “Our team is creating a sustainable economic model by, for example, hiring local workers for professional and construction needs, designing and building an infrastructure to support fully sustainable energy and locally produced food, and establishing a farmers' market and bi-lingual school just outside the development,” says Benner. “Crops are being harvested from the property this season for local restaurants, and coffee trees planted in 2007 have a target harvest date of 2011—just in time for the second wave of lot owners to enjoy from the decks of their new villas.”

The development’s second phase features construction of a community center, built as a rancho with 360 degree views, and a caretaker’s villa. All construction materials are in line with true eco-building, incorporating “earth bags”—recycled banana bags filled with a special mixture of sand and clay soil obtained on site, stacked on top of one another and finished with stucco to form the main structure.

The open-air floor plan will include indoor and outdoor areas to gather, dine and enjoy the dramatic views, sunsets and the continual morning and evening breezes. Guest quarters and a community kitchen for all landowners to use while their homes are being built are incorporated in the design. The caretaker’s home will be powered by solar panels and supported by a plant-based waste water management system.

“Finca Las Brisas is a sea-change model for future eco-developments worldwide because of its combined social and economic sustainability,” says Benner. “We are committed to do the right thing by the land, the people of Costa Rica, and those who will own part of this rich and beautiful setting.”

The best time to visit Finca Las Brisas and Costa Rica is January through March. A full time site manager is available for tours of the property and falls. For more information, visit www.FincaLasBrisas.org or call 484-213-5345.

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