

Kinkade paintings inspire Cd'A Lake development

By RICK THOMAS
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Five homes will be built to look like famous painter's renderings ... on the outside

COEUR d'ALENE -- The call of the eagle that soars overhead is just about the only sound other than the rustle of an updraft through the pines on the bluff overlooking Lake Coeur d'Alene.

As if called on by a wizard to greet the visitors to this fantasy site, the bird of prey disappears around the curve of the hill with a view as picturesque as a Thomas Kinkade painting.

It will, in fact, be both, as the artist has teamed up with a Coeur d'Alene group to develop The Gates of Coeur d'Alene, with five homes on 22 acres designed to match a series of the artist's works.

"Kinkade was willing to let us take literally what he'd done," said Rann Haight, a Coeur d'Alene architect and director of architecture for HST Group who conceived of the project and bought the property east of the city a couple of years ago. "We agreed to stay loyal to the architecture of his paintings. Even the windows will be in the same place."

Haight teamed with Roger Stewart, a former contractor, and builder Steve Torres to form HST Group and create the flagship for what will be a national home brand, Thomas Kinkade Masterpiece Homes.

Haight's idea began to take form when he worked with Torres on a Tuscan home along Sanders Beach.

Torres, director of construction for HST Group, moved to Coeur d'Alene from Los Gatos, Calif., where he attended church with Kinkade. After a few meetings and about a year of brainstorming, he developed the idea with the artist, who was interested in expanding his brand.

"We didn't want to do cookie-cutter projects on the prairie," Haight said. "We wanted to do a landmark project, one that would adapt to the environment."

The five homes, modeled after Kinkade's "Beyond Autumn Gate," "Blessings of Spring," "Gardens Beyond Spring Gate," "Winsor Manor," and "Lamplight Manor," will be built in a gated community above Coeur d'Alene Lake Drive along about a quarter mile off Yellowstone Avenue just west of Timothy Lane.



JASON HUNT/Press

This view overlooking Lake Coeur d'Alene will be the site for five Kinkade Masterpiece Homes. From left, Steve Torres, contractor; Roger Stewart, head of marketing; and Rann Haight, architect.

"There's a spectacular view along the line of the lake toward town," Torres said. "One of the great things is it's only four minutes from downtown."

The home sites, three with about 3/4 of an acre and two with 1 1/4 acres, will be positioned on the site with southern views but barely in sight of each other. When finished, each will have a circular property line drawn around them, with the balance of the land in a homeowners association. Haight's concept of round lots was based on the lay of the land, which slopes gently up away from the steep cliff over the road several hundred feet below.

"You won't hear the sound and fury of jet skis on the water," Haight said.

While the houses, which will range from 5,800 to 11,000 square feet, will be externally identical to Kinkade's fantasy visions, fulfilling the fantasy will answer the question, "What would I see behind that door?" Haight said.

"This project is for anyone who has ever wished they could step into a Thomas Kinkade painting, walk down a dappled lane, and step through the front door."

Living the fantasy won't be for everyone, with prices starting at about \$4 million for what will be the only estate series the group plans.

Next is a development in Overland Park, Kan., in the rolling hills outside Kansas City, where cottages will be built on about 200 acres. A Charleston, S.C., project is also planned, and the group is looking for a site for a cabin series.

"This is the flagship," Torres said. "It gets the national introduction."

All will have in common what HST Group's finance and marketing director Stewart calls the Thomas Kinkade lifestyle.

"It's 3-D space around livable art," he said. "It will be high-quality homes with the best material, the best architects, the best construction and the best view."