

## "Jack Galanek - We've proved it at Wildwood"

Hartford Courant ~ August 13, 1972

*The following aptly and accurately describes Wildwood's developer's initial design and layout mindset - still held to adherence today (35 years later). It is the word-for-word transcription of the original full-page Hartford Courant ad (published 8-13-1972 - seen at right) produced by Jack and Connie Galanek, functional developers of Wildwood. I've added comments when appropriate to reflect any notable updates. (Karl Ellison, Editor, Oct. 2006).*

THE HARTFORD COURANT: Sunday, August 13, 1972

"Recreational real estate development can live in peace with conservation and ecology - I'm Jack Galanek, and



**We've proved it at Wildwood"**

"My business is real-estate development, but I'm a serious conversationalist by nature, background and commitment. My place is called Wildwood, and you've been hearing about it since 1966.

"Now that we're entering our final sales season, I'd like to tell you what makes Wildwood work, both as a profitable recreational real estate development and as an achievement in preserving the ecology of the wilderness that contains it.



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"Wildwood is a private, four-season vacation home community developed by my company, Chenonix Chalet Properties Inc. on 740 acres of still-unspoiled Berkshire woodland in the tiny town of Tolland, Massachusetts.

"It was conceived to offer people living primarily in Central and Southern Connecticut highly accessible vacation property, with recreational facilities which can be used and enjoyed frequently and on a year-round basis, whether a second home is built or not. This is possible because we are within an hour to an hour-and-a-half's drive of most of Connecticut metropolitan areas and because our facilities are such that people not need build their home at once to start using and enjoying Wildwood frequently and immediately upon purchase, in fact the intent to build is not a requirement to own here, although it is encouraged eventually.

"Our facilities include two clear private lakes (powerboats are prohibited), sandy beaches with bathhouses, a private ski area and a rustic clubhouse.

"The use of all these facilities is restricted exclusively to Wildwood property owners.

"An important point here is that 40% of our total acreage is wilderness and it devoted to what we call open space and greenbelt. This is land on which nothing will ever be built. It is the wilderness in its natural state, left almost just as we found it. It is for all of our people and for the native wildlife to roam in and enjoy. Its preservation is guaranteed by enforceable restrictive covenants.

"I don't want to sell to the rich - there aren't enough of them. My philosophy in developing and marketing Wildwood has been based on putting desirable land to its best possible human and ecological use, and then making it available to the everyday kind of people who respect their incomes and consequentially put their money where it works for them in the best fashion. These are the kind of people who own at Wildwood.

"I also recognize and believe that much of the countryside should be left as it is. Some should be developed as National and State parks and preserves for the most numbers of us to use and enjoy, and for the protection of the wildlife and plant life that delights us. I grew up in the woods and I understand this.

"But it also must be understood within the framework of land-use for human-needs, that ownership of recreational real estate is a right which should not be denied to average hard-working people who are participating responsibly in this economy. Why ownership? For frequent and relatively private use, for the right to control their recreational environment, for a financial investment; for their kids. For all the reasons that motivate ownership of anything. This is why communities like Wildwood serve a human and social need. Being near enough to

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the cities and suburbs, they provide the opportunities for the middle-income family to get away from it all, make a real estate investment, and enjoy tax benefits.

"Unhappily, many well-intentioned public bodies are enacting excessively ridged environment, zoning and planning regulations which might result in limiting ownership of recreational property only to the very wealthy.

" I am not against controls and regulations for land development. Reasonable controls are necessary, and I welcome them. This will keep the wrong kind of people out of what should be a highly responsible and moral business. Reasonable controls would make a community like Wildwood the rule rather than the exception.

"I believe the fashion in which Wildwood was developed and the manner in which it functions today as a recreational community, demonstrate that a maximum amount resources can remain undisturbed in a so called commercial development.

"Let me explain how this was accomplished through two areas of planning:

"First, though our physical layout - of home-sites, roadways and community facilities, and secondly, through restrictions imposed on usage.

"I discovered the land which was to become Wildwood in 1964, while cruising timber for my father's lumber company. Wildwood was started on a shoestring budget and operated for nearly five years on what big time land corporations would call lunch money.

"This early condition of corporate poverty gave me ample time to learn every inch of the ground personally, to work closely with my land engineers in determining its design and to perform much of the physical labor myself. This gave me maximum control over what was happening. Our initially slow but orderly growth gave me the opportunity to learn by my faster-moving competitor's mistakes, particularly in the areas of homesite layout and the important of establishing restriction prior to selling property.

"Consequently, two long years of planning and preliminary development went into Wildwood before we opened for sales in 1968. The preliminary development included building an eight-acre beaver pond into a 75-acre spring and stream-fed lake, surveying home sites, laying out and building roads, diverting them to save favorite trees.

"Our roadways are all relatively narrow, gravel-surfaces country roads [They are now rough-paved - Ed.] This was done to keep the country in the country, to keep speeds down to our 15 mile per hour limit. There are a few homesites located in the well-traveled main roadways and

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most of our main road-ways are bordered along either side by a green-belt. Driving along, one has the impression of a secluded wooded trail.

"All of our homesites, except waterfront, are arranged in small clusters of villages, bounded on at least two sides in most cases by large tracts of wooded open spaces or community-held land. This creates added privacy and quiet and big back yards that belong to everyone; for hiking, exploring and for the animals. Homesites are arranged around dead-end roads, horseshoe shaped roads, and roads ending in cul-de-sacs, circular green park areas. This was designed to discourage traffic from entering a particular village, unless, of course, the parties have property there.

"We have laid out all of our homesites employing the concept of 'cluster planning', as opposed to parallel and perpendicular streeting. First, because this kind of arrangement is the most esthetically pleasing and more in keeping with the rural surroundings in a vacation home area, and secondly, because it allowed us to use the land which is best suited for building specifically for homesites, and to preserve the rest for open space and for community recreation facilities.

"Now we certainly didn't invent cluster planning, but I can say that we were the first developer of our kind to employ it successfully in this part of the country. So if you're shopping for vacation property, be sure to determine from a plot plan whether or not the situation is wall-to-wall lots and if it is, even though they may be large lots, you're in trouble. When everybody finally builds, you'll have just another transplanted suburb, and the wilderness you came in search of will be gone forever.

"Our homesites range from one-third of an acre to almost an acre. But again; we're talking about second-home living and people being out-of-doors and out of their own back yards most of the time, taking advantage of the many recreational opportunities. And remember most of these lots are backing up to larger tracts of open space, which virtually extends one's backyard to as much as 30 acres in some cases.

"Now we're not Santa Claus and the cost of preserving such property for open space is paid for by the people who use it. These costs are blended into the price structure of our homesites and is the case with our Clubhouse, our tennis courts, our ski area, our beaches.

"By controlling our lot sizes and concentrating them in a series of well-separated clusters on the most desirable building acreage, we've been able to offer a total of around 560 leisure homesites within our 740 acres and still retain 40% of nature the way we found it. Over 400 families have already purchased at Wildwood and we expect to be sold out this winter. When that happens, those who bought strictly for investment should have a seller's market.

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"Around our large lake there are four sandy community beaches each served by bath-houses with shower and sanitary facilities. There is also a beach area at our smaller lake, which we call Otter Pond. These areas are intended primarily for the use of those families who own off-shore properties. Now we could have made only two large beaches and thereby reserve additional waterfront footage for homesites. But my intent has to always avoid congestion in any one spot by dispersing our recreational activities throughout the total property. For our off-shore people, who are in the majority, there are also several right of ways scattered around the lakes.

"Parking areas are nearby to all our community recreational areas - but you can't see them. They are hidden in groves of trees, out of eyeshot from the roads and from the facilities they serve. We have turnaround areas adjacent to each facility to make it convenient for loading and unloading the kids, beach gear, skiing equipment, etc. But parking is constricted to the concealed marked parking areas. This necessitates a short walk, but hopefully this is one reason



why people seek rural surroundings - to be out-of-doors and away from the more unsightly trappings of contemporary life. Parking lots are a visual blight. Hiding them contributes a lot to the overall aesthetics at Wildwood. There's no need to scar the landscapes with all those messages from Detroit.

"We have a number of community recreational facilities which are carefully placed to blend unobtrusively into their surroundings. But let me first say that Wildwood is not a country club. All of our facilities are low-maintenance facilities, designed to require a minimum of future care and expense. When my work as a developer is done, our property owners will be paying an additional assessment for the maintenance of our facilities. Consequently we have nothing as elaborate as a golf course at Wildwood, nothing which would require a substantial amount of money to maintain.

"However, we do have such items as a novice-intermediate ski slope. Our ski area is sheltered on all sides by a boarder of trees. It wouldn't put Stowe out of business, but it's a good place to get acquainted with the sport. [The ski area closed c.1984 by membership vote due to outrageous insurance premiums - Ed.]

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"Our clubhouse is a tri-leveled weathered wood building with a rough sawn pine interior, and it looks out at the lake and is set back in the trees and its appointments include two big fieldstone fire places, rustic furniture, a basement recreation area with ping pong and games, sanitary and shower facilities and dressing rooms. [Also a kitchenette and main office for the WPOA - Ed.] Our clubhouse is intended first to serve those people who have not yet built homes, and as a gathering place for Wildwood functions.

"Adjacent to our clubhouse is an outdoor recreation center with twin tennis courts [now three - Ed.], a ball field and a basketball court. The area is hidden in a grove of trees as none of the facilities are visible from any road or building.

"We have an ice skating area up at our Otter Pond, and a cross-country ski trail nearby. We have good fishing here. Our main lake, a 75-acre body, has pickerel and perch in natural abundance and we've also stocked it with largemouth bass. The Otter Pond, about 9-acres in size, was stocked this spring with 1,600 trout.

"Our lake water is clear - we do not permit power boats. Sailfish, Sunfish, canoe, rowboat, even electric motors up to 5-horsepower, fine. But no gasoline-burning engines. The big lake ranged in depths up to 30 feet and both bodies are constantly being flushed by an abundant natural supply of springs and streams. The integrity of the lakes are under frequent surveillance by a team of certified aquatic engineers as well as our own property owners association committee for lake management.

"Restrictive covenants, duly recorded and enforceable in a court of law, govern the use of all Wildwood facilities and properties and will work to guarantee that the quality of our community will be preserved. This is the second method most important in maintaining our sociologic balance.

"Before we sold our first lot at Wildwood, we formed the Wildwood Property Owners Association and it was duly incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Everyone who buys property at Wildwood must join the Association and consent to the payment of annual dues and the observance of its codes.

"Our restrictions prohibit trailers or any type of a temporary structure to be placed on any homesite. Only one single-family dwelling is permitted. No more than 50% of the trees may be cut on any lot and all lots are very well wooded. All building plans must be approved in advance by the developer or his assigns. We require a minimum of 576 square feet of living space on the ground level of any home, and this count excludes porches, sundecks and the like. This is not large; it is just the minimum. We have some large homes and some very attractive modest homes. It has never been our intent to dictate homebuilding aesthetics to our property

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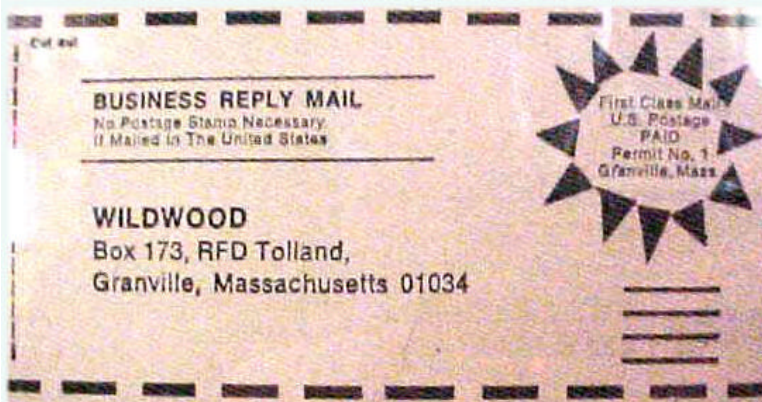
owners, but we clearly encourage rustic and contemporary designs with stained exteriors which harmonize with the wooded surroundings. Log homes are also popular.

"We have, in fact, an affiliated building company, Timberwood Corporation, which handles the largest percentage of homebuilding for our property owners. Our people are by no means obliged to use Timberwood, but its presence here gives us excellent insurance on the future quality of Wildwood homes.

"The Wildwood Property Owners Association is a vital and interested group which will take over the management and maintenance of Wildwood when my work as a developer is completed. I am a member myself because my family and I make our home here and intend to keep it. The people who bought Wildwood property didn't just buy a piece of the earth, they bought the philosophy of what we were doing with the wilderness and they bought our commitment to keep it that way. After our last lot is sold, I will deed over to the Association all of our open space land and community facilities, but will do so with the contingency that the wilderness be preserved. It can never be sold, subdivided or put to any offensive use.

"I believe other people involved with Wildwood have this attitude toward the wilderness too. The majority of my full-time sales and administration staff own Wildwood property, and in most instances their purchase occurred before their employment. We have a small but well-knit staff. At 37, I'm the senior. My administrative people are all under 35.

"Good recreational property is never cheap, particularly in a private community protected by sound planning and reasonable restrictions. But if you are a believer in its value and can recognize that this kind of investment is becoming a vanishing opportunity on the American landscape, it's still a bargain. If you are interested in this kind of investment, see Wildwood first.



"Prices for Wildwood property start at \$5,450 for woodland and lakeview sites, and reach as high as \$18,000 for waterfront sites. Our properties are priced to reflect today's market value and they are not inflated by high advertising and promotion costs. We don't give potential prospects free dinners, parties, free weekends, free anything ... because there

is no such things as 'free' in this business. The customer ends up paying for these extravaganzas because their costs must be built into the lot prices. At Wildwood, you get what you pay for ... your homesite and your membership in the Wildwood Property Owners Association.

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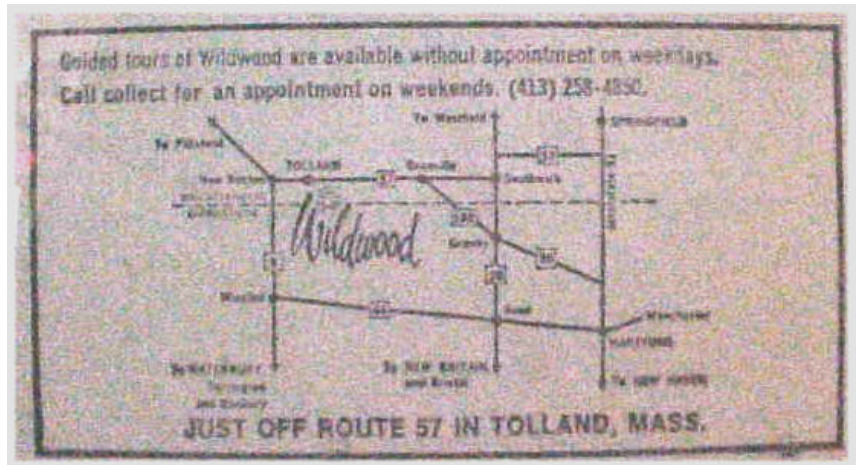
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"Our annual membership dues in our Association are \$25 per family. When Wildwood becomes self-supporting, and my work as developer is done, dues will go up. However due to the low maintenance nature of our facilities and the number of families involved, dues will continue to be reasonable.

"Wildwood is located within the town of Tolland, Massachusetts, which is itself in a unique position. It has a total year-round population of 140 people and the influx of seasonal people at Wildwood has tended to stabilize the local tax base.

"A typical offshore homesite, with no building, currently pays taxes of \$19.80 annually, a waterfront \$28.00. The most elaborate waterfront vacation home here, with 1200 square feet of ground-level living area, all-wood construction, fireplace, 4-bedrooms, pays \$168.00 annually.

"This is the way it is at Wildwood. I hope I've demonstrated to you that it's the kind of place where land conservation can be successfully employed to give more people the privilege of quality recreational real estate ownership. Maybe it's the kind of place you've been looking for. Maybe it's not. But if you are interested, I would urge you to call or write for an appointment and come to Wildwood now. We are 80% sold out and when our last homesite is gone, this community will be closed for public inspection. Wildwood is a private community, and we have assured our property owners of their privacy. We cannot permit the public to drive through our area unless they have an escorted tour. [Or have a visitors pass from the office - Ed.] Whether you purchase here or not, there is something to be learned in experiencing Wildwood personally. I'd like to invite you to share Wildwood with me now, while there's still time.



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