



# DANIEL

## Hoover's Ross Bridge nabs "Best Community in America" Award

*The National Association of Home Builders names 2010 Award Winner*

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by Michael Tomberlin

Residents of Hoover's Ross Bridge can officially claim they live in the "Best Community in America."

The Daniel Corp. development won that designation from the National Association of Home Builders, beating out other communities from across the country.

In its first-ever platinum award for a community, the development and its sales and marketing teams received the award as part of the NAHB's "Best in American Living" ceremony and International Builders Show in Orlando on Friday.

"This is the real estate industry's version of a BCS national championship," said John Gunderson, senior vice president of residential real estate with Daniel. "It is a wonderful recognition for all of us in Birmingham."

Daniel teamed with USS Real Estate and the Retirement Systems of Alabama starting in 2003 to create Ross Bridge, which it dubbed "a classic American resort town."

Built on 1,700 acres of USS Real Estate property in the Shannon-Oxmoor Valley, the "resort" at its centerpiece is the \$55 million, 262-room Renaissance Hotel and spa and Ross Bridge Golf Resort and Conference Center built on a Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail course.

"Now that we have almost 900 homeowners, we are a full-blown community, so I was encouraged to enter Ross Bridge" in the contest, said Dorothy Tayloe, director of sales and marketing at Ross Bridge for Daniel Homes. "It was a very involved process. We thought our entry was great and we certainly are proud of Ross Bridge, but we were still surprised to win."

Margi Ingram, head of Ingram & Associates and Daniel Homes, said a key to Ross Bridge winning was in the details, down to the landscaping and street lights that were in keeping with the plans for the community. Plus, it didn't suffer from the kind of budget cutting that diminished other communities.

### Vision intact

"We've been lucky that we didn't have to sacrifice any of the vision the development team had for the community, despite the economy," she said.

Jeff Boyd, vice president of residential development with Daniel, lives in Ross Bridge. He said the events the community hosts -- farmers markets, movie nights in the park, Christmas lighting of the green, community garage sales, hometown

fairs, Easter egg hunts -- have helped make Ross Bridge more than a subdivision development.

A church has purchased five acres where it will build the Church at Ross Bridge in the next year or two, Boyd said.

The residential development is half way complete, he said.

“We’re closing in on 900 homes and we have entitlements for 1,800,” Boyd said. “At the end of the day, there will be close to 2,400 families at Ross Bridge, including the single-family and multi-family units.”

There will be two new neighborhoods introduced this year and possibly a second apartment community, Gunderson said. A second community pool, pavilion and playground are also set to open this summer.

Home prices range from the low \$200,000’s to more than \$1 million, Gunderson said. And although sales slowed during the downturn as they did everywhere else, Ross Bridge continues to see growth.

Developers planned to sell an average of 150 homes per year but have met or exceeded that goal every year, even during the downturn. Ross Bridge home sales accounted for 2.5 percent of the total metro new home sales in 2006 and grew to 3.6 percent in 2007, 5.7 percent in 2008 and 14.2 percent in 2009, according to Daniel.

Although the commercial development has been slower than expected, Gunderson said the growth at Village Center will finally begin to materialize this year as retailers and restaurants look to tap into the growing residential population there.

“We’ve got a grocery-anchored center that has committed to the land. We’re waiting for enough rooftops to get there to start breaking ground there,” Gunderson said.

“We’re now getting to a point in time where we’re getting enough resident traffic to demand some restaurant interest and some type of sundry neighborhood market. That’s on our plans for 2011.”

Hoover Mayor Tony Petelos said the recognition of Ross Bridge is a “big deal” for all of Hoover.

“I’ve always said Hoover is a great place to live and raise a family. All of our communities are unique in their own way,” he said. “There was a lot of forethought and a lot of vision that went into the development and the kinds of homes that are built at Ross Bridge.”