

By **TOM SCANLON**
The Daily Courier
tscanlon@prescottaz.com

RAISING THE ROOF

Housing construction booming in Prescott, PV

Get ready to meet your new neighbors.

Don't start cooking the welcome meal, as they're not here just yet. In fact, their houses don't even exist.

But make no mistake about it: They are coming. By the scores, hundreds, thousands ...

Prescott and Prescott Valley have started off the year with a bang – the bang of hammers. New houses are going up on what were once untouched hilltops and grassy valleys.

A prime example is the Astoria neighborhood, atop a hill in the Prescott Lakes development. These 27 acres with sweeping views were cleared and prepared for building several years ago, then stalled when the housing economy tanked.

Enter Dave Grounds, owner and president of Dorn Homes. "We've been trying to get that piece of land for three years," he said.

Grounds finally succeeded at the end of 2014, and quickly went to work on his vision of "this little nostalgic neighborhood that looks like Norman Rockwell created it."

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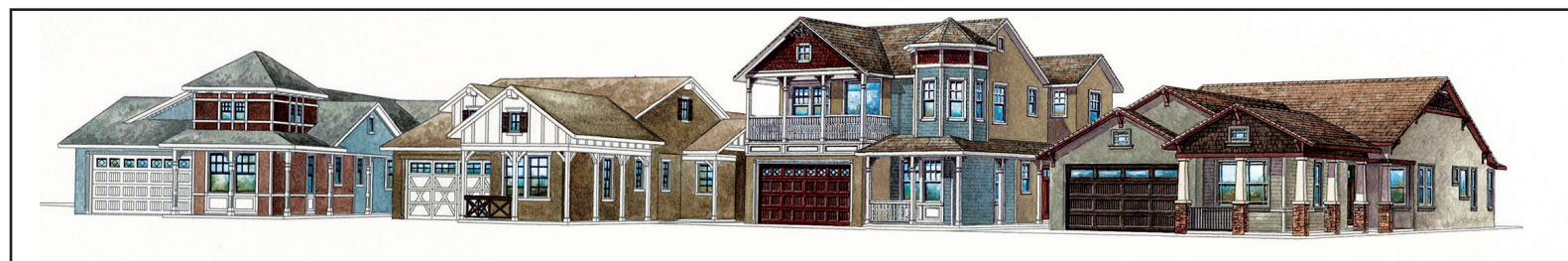
• HOUSES

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Unlike "cookie-cutter" subdivisions filled with identical modern homes, Astoria will be filled with nine variations of Victorian homes – and 35 color choices. Picture charming Mt. Vernon Street at the top of a hill, Grounds says.

Early this month, the gates that seemed to lead to nowhere opened to let in construction workers, who quickly started hammer and saw work on two Astoria model homes.

The time to bring his vision to life was right, said the top man at Dorn Homes. "We had one of our best years in 2014 – and the company has been in business for 45 years," Grounds said. "We set ambitious goals for 2015; we think 2015 is going to be really good."



Courtesy illustration

Dorn Homes will offer nine styles of Victorian homes and 35 color choices in the Astoria neighborhood of the Prescott Lakes development.

After the new-home-killing recession, "we think we're back," Grounds said, adding that buyers are coming from Phoenix, Southern California and the Midwest. "The demand is back. It's healthy."

Grounds said as many as 50 homes could be built and sold – prices starting just under \$300,000 – at Astoria this year. He thinks he could build and sell another 100 homes in other

neighborhoods of the Lakes.

Dorn Homes is also constructing houses at two Prescott Valley subdivisions: The Viewpoint, off Viewpoint Drive, and Quailwood Meadows/Villas. Grounds hopes to build and sell 75 homes in Prescott Valley in 2015.

He is not the only one racing to raise the roof in PV.

"This budget year, 2014/2015, we will hit at least 350 new home completions," said Richard Parker, Prescott Valley's community development director. "Next budget year could be over 400."

Think of that: With an average of three people per home, 750 new homes in PV in less than two years means over 2,000 new residents (real estate professionals say the great majority of new-home buyers come from outside the area,

particularly the Phoenix area and Southern California.)

The 350 to 400 new Prescott Valley homes projected this year are a huge increase from 2009 to 2012, when the average sank to around 50. This followed an explosion of more than 1,000 new Prescott Valley homes in 2005 and 2006.

While StoneRidge, Pronghorn Ranch, Quailwood and a few other big developments are contributing to the new homes, by far the biggest driver of the PV new-home market is Granville.

More than 1,400 new homes have been built in Granville over the last decade, with a projection for over 3,000 by the time Joe Contadino's Universal Homes development is complete.

"We're looking for 10 sales a month – a goal we hit last year," said Bob Lockman, a Universal

Homes broker.

With Granville's success selling homes in the \$190,000 to \$360,000 range, Lockman can be excused a boast: "We're blowing the socks off people," he crowed.

That may be, but Granville soon will be facing new competition, down the road and in its backyard.

FANN IN THE DELLS

Mike Fann, best known for his Fann Contracting road construction, is launching Granite Dells Estates Properties this year.

Fann said construction of models and "spec" homes (those that don't have buyers) will begin in March at the Dells, a development off Highway 89A.

While Fann only hopes to sell a few dozen homes this year, this could be the next growth area in Prescott, as the

Dells is zoned for 918 homes.

As impressive as a community of 2,000-plus might be, that's less than one-third the size of Glassford Heights, just four mile east of the Dells. Though still in its infancy, construction at Glassford Heights is scheduled to begin in the coming months.

Beginning where Granville ends, Glassford Heights is a Prescott Valley development that last year was approved for 3,600 homes on 1,200 acres.

It is fitting that Granville's neighbor is next to an extinct volcano called Glassford Hill, as new home sales in the area are blowing up – and the lava pouring out into Prescott and Prescott Valley will be ... your new neighbors.

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