

The Clarion-Ledger

clarionledger.com ■ REAL MISSISSIPPI

Gulfport tower nearly finished, all units bought

By Nell Luter Floyd
nlfloyd@clarionledger.com

April 3, 2005 -- Construction is nearing completion on Tower 1 of the \$60 million Legacy Condominiums in Gulfport.

It's the first high-rise to be constructed in a wave of condo development along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

"They're all sold out," Bill Webb, manager of the Gulf Coast regional office of the Mississippi Development Authority, said of the twin towers Legacy Condominiums on U.S. 90 on the former site of the Alamo Plaza Motor Inn. "I expect they'll be occupied by the end of summer."

Individual units vary from 1,860 square feet to 2,900 square feet and include high-end finishes such as crown molding, granite counters and ceramic tile flooring.

Prices began at \$360 a square foot, compared to \$200 a square foot for primary residences with similar finishes.

Other high-rises coming out of the ground include Beau View, a four-tower project with 448 condos near Edgewater Mall in Biloxi and Sea Breeze, a 10-story condo development under way next to Treasure Bay Casino in Biloxi.

Individual condos at Sea Breeze, which is the only condo project on the sand, range from \$350,000 to \$800,000 each, said Mike Boudreaux, president and chief executive officer of Gulf Coast Investment Developers.

"The average price is \$300 per square foot, and on the high end it topped out at



Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Artist's drawing of Beau View
Condominiums

\$410 a square foot," he said. "We anticipate the average price will be above \$500 per square foot in the next year."

Tower 1 of Sea Breeze is sold out, and the reservation stage of Tower 2 sold out in two weeks, he said. Construction on Tower 1 started last month and should take about a year.

Gulf Coast Development also is developing The Ocean Club Condominiums & Resort, 375 condos on the site of the former Biloxi Hilton. Tower 1 was announced last October and sold out in two weeks, Boudreaux said. Prices range from \$290,000 to \$850,000 a unit, he said.

Construction should begin in the next 60 days on The Ocean Club, and it's expected to take almost four years to finish the three-tower project, Boudreaux said.

Tonya Zimmern, marketing and sales director for the \$150 million Beau View condos, said Tower 1 of the project is fully reserved and should be completed in fall of 2006. Tower 2 was just released for reservation.

"We've got some people who want them for second homes," she said. "We've got other people who want to visit throughout the year and others who want to put on a rental program when they're not there."

No one may purchase more than two units at Beau View, she said. That's meant to ensure a mix of owners who aren't going to put their units on the market as soon as possible in hopes of turning a profit, she said.

Prices start at \$495,000 for a 1,690-square-foot condo with two bedrooms and two baths and go up to \$1.5 million for a 4,000-square-foot penthouse, she said. Finishes include stainless-steel appliances, granite counters in the baths and wet bar, floor-to-ceiling glass in the living area and Jacuzzi tubs.

"To the person driving by, it doesn't look like much, but we're finishing up groundwork in order to go vertical," she said. "We should go vertical any day."

Zimmern said the closing for Beau View Tower 1 should be in fall 2006 and that the total development is a four-year project. She said she's determining what the



Special to The Clarion-Ledger

Artist's drawing of Sea Breeze condominiums

units could rent for.

Mississippi offers year-round attractions such as casino entertainment and golfing and that's a selling point Destin, Fla., and Gulf Shores, Ala. don't have, she said. "It makes the Gulf Coast a wonderful opportunity," she said.

Webb said he expects Legacy, Sea Breeze and Beau View to set the standards for high-rise developments to come.

Vincent Creel, spokesman for the city of Biloxi, said there are 561 existing condo units in Biloxi and 215 under construction.

"That represents \$43.9 million in new construction," he said. "On top of that, another 1,000 units are on the drawing board, representing a potential of \$120 million in new condo construction. That's not to say we're going to see all the condo construction move forward."

Chevis Swetman, president, chief executive officer and chairman of The Peoples Bank, which has 16 branches along the Gulf Coast, said developers are purchasing mom and pop hotels to tear them down and use the property for high rises. "The Biloxi Beach Motor Inn was purchased in February, and contracts have been signed for several other properties," he said.

Swetman also named these condo projects that have been announced: Portofino in Biloxi, Camellia Point in Ocean Springs, Pass Marianne in Pass Christian and Tuscan Villas in Gulfport.

"You start looking at all of these smaller projects and big towers, and what we're starting to see is a lot of condominium developers are coming in from Florida. It's because of Ivan, they're trying to get out of Florida and land values are cheaper than in Florida."

Boudreaux said his company has 10 condo projects at various stages under way on the Gulf Coast and that even the smaller ones will make an impact.

"We're building Beau Soli on the former site of Burger King in Biloxi, and it's 14 units that are about 3,000 square feet each," he said. "Each unit will sell for \$2 million and \$3 million."