

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

# MUSEUM DISTRICT housing sees uptick in buyer interest

By HEATHER NICHOLSON  
*Homes Correspondent*

The Museum District is an area of Houston that encompasses 18 museums offering everything from fine art, to contemporary photography, to natural science to the Holocaust history. The area is bounded by Westheimer at the north, Alameda Road to the east, University Boulevard to the south and Shepherd Drive on the west. This popular residential area is merged with commercial development and world-renowned museums. Hermann Park, Rice University, Miller Outdoor Theater, U.S. 59 and the MetroRail are part of the Museum District.

"The great part about the Museum District is the cultural amenities (are) a short walk or a bicycle ride away. You also have great tree-lined jogging trails at Rice University and Hermann Park," said Vincent Biondillo, president of Norhill Realty. "Not only do you get great natural and cultural surroundings, you also get a short commute. The Museum District

is blocks away from the (Texas) Medical Center, and a very short commute to downtown and Greenway Plaza."

This area consists of several historic neighborhoods with refurbished mansions and bungalows, including Boulevard Oaks, Southampton, Shadyside, Shadowlawn, Waverly Place, West 11th and Broadacres.

The Turner Addition, from Graustark Street to Montrose Boulevard, is a small section of townhomes, duplexes, unrestricted properties and businesses.

Shadyside originally was designed in 1916, and has 18 properties behind its gates. Shadowlawn is a single, secluded street hosting some of the most beautiful examples of residential design, while Broadacres is a historic district with classic mansions and manicured lawns. Southgate, bordering Rice University campus, boasts a civic spirit with deed restrictions, and there are mature oaks lining both sides of its streets.

In addition to the stately homes in the Museum District, Biondillo said new

construction in the area also is a hot commodity. Luxury townhomes have 2,000 to 3,500 square feet and range in price from \$350,000 to \$600,000. Currently on the market is new development Wichita Village by Daybreak Custom Homes. Units start at \$349,950 and range to \$549,950.

"The Museum District (has) experienced a little bit of a downturn, however, this has presented a great opportunity for home buyers," Biondillo said. "A lot of new luxury townhome developments came on line in late 2008, early 2009, which has added a lot of inventory to the market. And activity is beginning to tick back up. I expect falling inventories to continue into 2010, as the economy and buyer incentives attract more buyers to the market."

Housing isn't the only thing growing in the Museum District. In April, an \$11 million renovation and transformation of Hermann Park's Lake Plaza began, including the addition of a new bridge over the lake, the opening of Little Bigs restaurant, and a new gift shop and dining center.

This month, the Asia Society will begin construction on a new 38,000-square-foot facility encompassing two city blocks at Southmore and Caroline streets. The state-of-the-art facility is designed by renowned architect Yoshio Taniguchi, best known in the U.S. for his 2004 expansion to the Museum of Modern Art in New York.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NORHILL REALTY

A new-construction home designed by Intexture Architects

In late 2008, the Museum District celebrated the opening of Mosaic on Hermann Park, a 30-story luxury condominium development. The complex includes a fitness center, swimming pool, lounge and valet service. In the next month or so, The Venue

luxury apartment complex will open. The Venue is on the MetroRail and will contain 224 units.

"It is an exciting time for the Museum District. As a residential neighborhood, the Museum District is one of the best-kept secrets in the Inner Loop. The quality

of new construction, and the cultural and natural amenities are second to none. These new developments will bring hundreds of new visitors and residents to the area, and will assuredly bring more attention for home buyers," Biondillo said.



Living area, new-construction townhome at Wichita Village



Wichita Village townhomes by Daybreak Custom Homes



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