

A Multifamily Alternative

Princeton Development Designed on a Large Scale

By RACHELLE GARBARINE

Special to The New York Times

PRINCETON, N.J. — When Catalyst Properties decided to enter the condominium town house market in this affluent Mercer County community, it did so on an unusually grand scale.

The company, whose principals are Michael Giardino and his father, David, is building Governors Lane, a 20-acre project in which each unit resembles Princeton's imposing single-family homes. Each home will have 2,500 to 4,000 square feet of space — the nationwide average for a single-family home is 2,050 square feet — and each home can be custom designed to some extent.

There will be 65 three-story Georgian-style houses, with brick and stucco facades, and no two will look the same. The three courtyards that are being carved from the hillside off Terhune Road, each with 20 to 25 units in six buildings, are nestled among trees and turn their backs to the streets. About 60 percent of the site, in the northeastern corner of this

16.5-square-mile township, will remain undeveloped.

Each unit will have two to four bedrooms, nine-foot ceilings, two fireplaces, a finished basement and a two-car garage. There is also an on-site caretaker. Although the land under and around the units is held in common, each unit will have a private yard 19 feet deep and up to 45 feet wide.

The first 25 units in the \$16 million project are built, and all but 4 are sold. Sales have opened on the next 20 units, and the developers are hoping to have 6 sold before the beginning of construction, which is expected in March.

Prices range from \$310,000 to \$525,000. Monthly maintenance is \$265, and taxes are about \$5,000 a year.

The average sales price for a single-family house in Princeton Township or Princeton Borough is \$341,982, though some sell for \$1 million or more, said James Schreiber, president of the Mercer County Board of Realtors. The average town house price is \$289,900.

The Governors Lane site was subdivided from 25 acres of woodlands once occupied by the Italian-Amer-

The town houses mimic the big homes in an affluent area.

ican Sportsman's Club. In 1985 the Giardinis bought the land, which was zoned for commercial use or residential lots of 1.5 acres, for \$2.2 million. They intended to build office condominiums, but switched to the current plan when nearby homeowners raised concerns about an increase in traffic.

Michael Giardino said the higher-density housing, which required a use variance, was needed to make the project economically feasible. It also offered an opportunity to build an alternative type of housing, he added.

Single-family houses predominate in Princeton. During the mid-80's real estate boom, however, there was a spurt of multifamily projects, both because of the scarcity of easily buildable land and because such projects helped the community meet its obligations under the state's Mount Laurel rulings, which required it to provide 275 residences for low- and moderate-income people.

New developments have been thwarted by a sewer moratorium that will remain in effect until the local Stoney Brook Regional Sewage Authority receives state approval to accept additional capacity, said Robert V. Kiser, the township's engineer. A response is not expected for another year, he said.

Governors Lane, one of the few attached-housing projects still moving ahead, has faced its share of hurdles. Prices set last year were reduced by 10 percent to quicken sales. And as is the case with other projects that have taken longer than expected to build, the construction loan, for \$13 million from United Jersey Bank, has been reworked.

The bank lowered its interest rate; in exchange, the developers put in additional equity. David Giardino said their investment could double, to about \$4 million.

After a three-year slump in which high-priced houses were hard hit, the county's housing market has begun to stabilize, Mr. Schreiber said. There is an oversupply of houses, and buyers are concerned about the state of the economy, he added, but housing with a Princeton address still seems to draw buyers.

Michael Giardino, who is also the architect for Governors Lane, said the units were designed for empty-nesters and professional couples who want an easier way of life but still want a spacious home.

When Theodore and Carroll Kane, both in their 60's, returned to Princeton after a 20-year absence, they left their single-family home in Sewickley, a Pittsburgh neighborhood, for a unit at Governors Lane. The Kanes — he is a recently retired bank manager, she is a former teacher — settled into their new home in April. They chose a town house because they liked the idea of living in an environment "with the freedom to come and go as we please," Mrs. Kane said.

As for room, "Governors Lane is the closest thing we found to a single-family home," Mr. Kane added.

The project is expected to be completed during the next two years.

Residential Properties

New models open at Governor's Lane

Princeton's luxury townhome community, Governor's Lane, announces the grand opening of their two newest furnished models as part of a week-long showing to realtors, interested prospects and the general public.

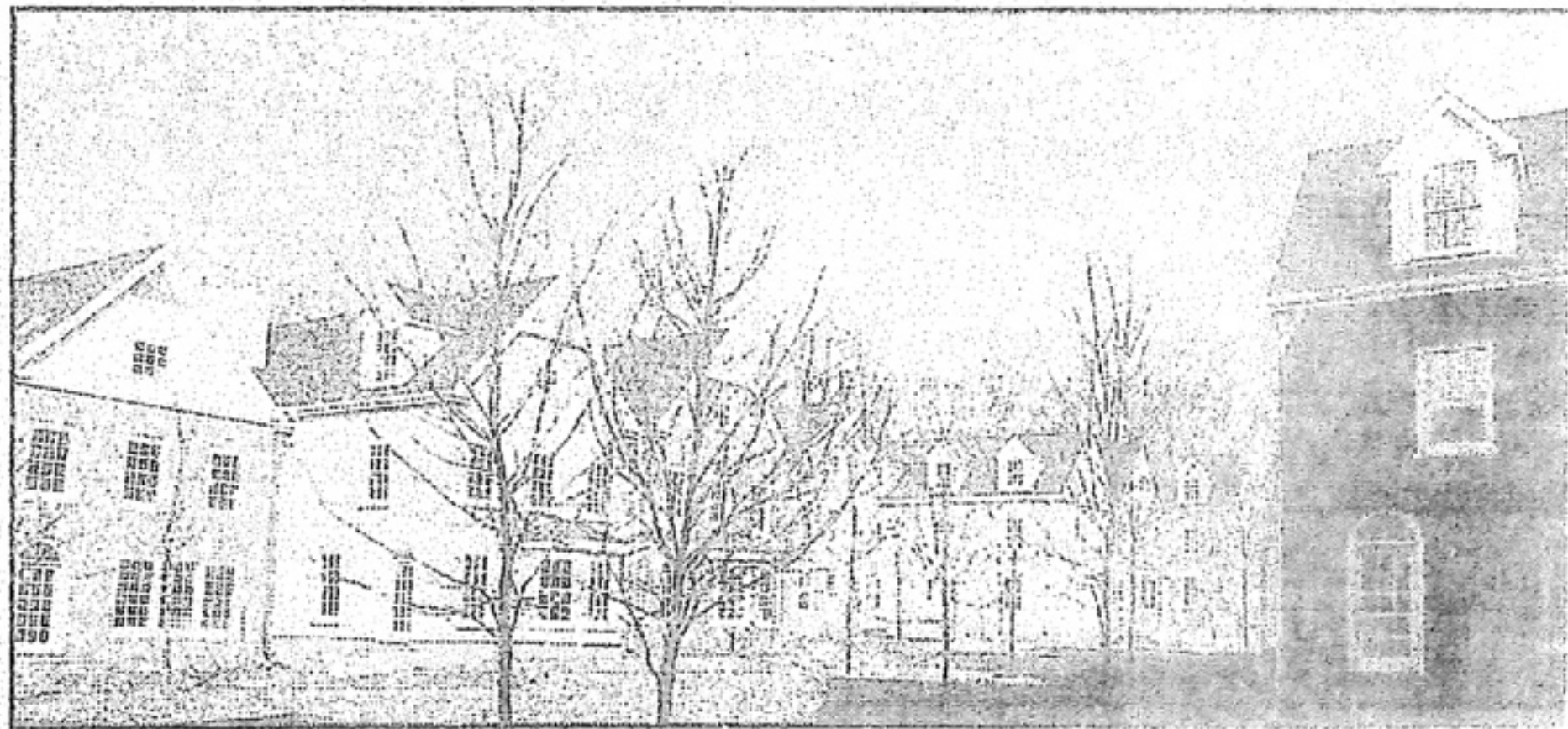
"The initial reaction to these decorated homes has exceeded our highest expectations," remarks David Giardino, developer of the community. "At last, there's a townhome community worthy of a Princeton address, and quite a few homebuyers are sharing our vision. Six homes have already been sold before the models were completed."

Starting with a site plan inspired by designs by Thomas Jefferson, Governor's Lane takes its role as Princeton's leading townhome enclave quite seriously. The substantial brick and stucco homes are exceptionally large, up to 3500 square feet with as many as 4 bedrooms and finished basements, and are rendered in classical Georgian styles rich with such architectural detailing as gables, bay windows, brick chimneys and masonry quoining.

Governor's Lane's 20-acre hillside setting evokes the glories of 18th and 19th Century Princeton as well. The densely wooded, hilly terrain is enlivened by tree-lined drives as well as courtyards professionally landscaped by Henry Arnold of Princeton. Upon completion, Governor's Lane will encompass only 65 homes, of which 18 are being readied for occupancy this summer and fall.

"No effort was spared in crafting a community of historically-correct charm and style with the overriding objective to provide a lifestyle that will be just as comfortable today as well as into the 21st century," Giardino continues.

At Governor's Lane, the homes are complete with such standard features as 2-car garages, basements that are both full-height and fully-finished, large storage areas, zoned central air-conditioning, studies or home offices, private walled garden courts, and spacious "great rooms" with woodburning fire-



Governor's Lane in Princeton has just unveiled two decorated models.

places. Additionally, homeowners will enjoy dramatic skylit staircases, open-plan kitchens and family rooms, and exceptionally private and generous master suites with sitting rooms as well as sumptuous baths with whirlpools. Homes at Governor's Lane range from \$380,000 to \$450,000.

With a choice of five different home models, buyers at Governor's Lane can make their homes as unique as their signatures. "We are selling these townhomes with a complete and diversified series of custom features which can purchased as a total package," says Berit Marshall of Marshall Real Estate, community sales director. "This gives buyers a significant advantage in terms of both dollars saved and the opportunity to custom design their homes without utilizing outside contractors."

Governor's Lane is located in the heart of Princeton, on Terhune Road just east of Route 206 and Harrison Street. The enclave is

two minutes from Palmer Square, Nass Street and the Princeton Shopping Center and within an easy drive from the University as well as all the outstanding private and public schools and cultural attractions for which Princeton is famed.

To see the models at Governor's Lane, from New Jersey Turnpike South, take Exit 9, Route 571 West to US 1 North right on US 1 (North) to Harrison Street. Take Harrison Street approximately 1 1/2 miles, turn right on Terhune Road (first street after Princeton Shopping Center), to second left on Governor's Lane. From New Jersey Turnpike North, take Exit 9 to Route 18 West to US 1 South, Harrison Street in Princeton. Travel approximately 1 1/2 miles to right on Terhune Road, to second left (approx 1/2 mile) on Governor's Lane. Call (609) 683-7272.

Buyers begin to discover Governor's Lane

By Fay Richardson
Real Estate Editor

Visiting the new townhouses at Governors Lane off Terhune Road in Princeton Township is a little like finding Glocca Morra, the mystical Irish town in Finian's Rainbow — it's there but it's hard to believe it's real and that the year is 1990.

Designed by Michael Giardino, A.I.A., who is also the developer, the English Georgian period townhouses are arranged around formal garden courtyards. The formality of the paths and landscaping, designed with Jeffersonian precision by Henry Arnold of Princeton, are softened by large clay pots filled with bright blossoms of impatiens and geraniums. Each home has a private brick walled garden as well as a two-car garage.

Although the community is built on 20 acres just about a mile and a half from Palmer Square, it has the air of being miles out in a countryside. A tree-lined boulevard, between Thanet Circle and All Saints Church, winds up a slight rise from Terhune Road. At the top the houses come into view. Because of the trees and the slight elevation, the setting is unusually quiet.

Since the furnished models opened at the end of April several families have bought homes in Governors Lane. An advertisement placed in the New York Times Magazine, brought more prospective buyers.

"Some of the visitors who had seen the ad were from Princeton," said Berit Marshall, sales manager at Governors Lane. "They said they didn't even know we were here."

It nearly wasn't.

The developer had bought the parcel from the Princeton Italian American Sportsmen's Club with the intention of building a small office/research park, but as property owners expressed concern over the the potential traffic impact of such a development, Mr. Giardino decided instead to build the attached single family homes, a decision that was strongly supported by local residents. The Club, which kept five acres of the property, is beginning construction of new facility, and Mr. Giardino is the developer for the Club as well.

Shifting architectural gears, from an office park to a residential community, came easily to Mr.

Giardino, who is experienced in both kinds of construction.

A registered architect, and a graduate of Wesleyan with a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, he formerly worked for the Princeton architectural firm CUH2A designing commercial buildings, hospitals, dormitories and homes. Earlier, he developed Brooks Bend on Pretty Brook Road.

While the townhomes at Governors Lane were not to be in the \$1 million category of the Brooks Bend houses with their expansive lots, the townhomes' construction has been as painstakingly undertaken.

The architect-developer began with two major concepts: the first that the homes would be individualized; the second that Governors Lane would be echo the appearance of the campus of Princeton University.

"My father graduated from Princeton, and when he left, he always talked about coming back here to live. Eventually he did.

"I like to walk on the campus, and I wanted this place to be reminiscent of the University. So it was organized by courtyards, with a stylistic mix. With each courtyard we used different stone. There five kinds of brick here."

Pleased with his finished product, Mr. Giardino moved his wife and two children into one of the new homes, where from an upper story Mr. Giardino says he can see the steeples of Princeton.

There is room for families with children in the spacious townhouses. The five models, priced from \$450,000 to \$565,000, have two to four bedrooms, 2 1/2 or 3 1/2 baths, and finished basements. Enclosed living space of ranges from 2,575 to 3,895 square feet. On the second level doors in the hallway conceal a built-in laundry area. An extra large water heater in the basement provides for the whirlpool bath off the main bedroom.

Ceilings on the first floor are nine feet high and the windows are six feet, adding to the spacious look. The historic look from the courtyards is maintained by having no visible airconditioner condensers. The commercial grade airconditioning systems are located in louvred space under the roof. The system has two zones, so that families who choose to use the third floor as an attic may

conserve energy.

In designing individualized homes, the architect arranged for each side of a building to show only one entrance, avoiding the usual long row of front doors found in many townhouse developments. Each building has a different exterior design. One is of brick with coinage to add variation and to cast shadow

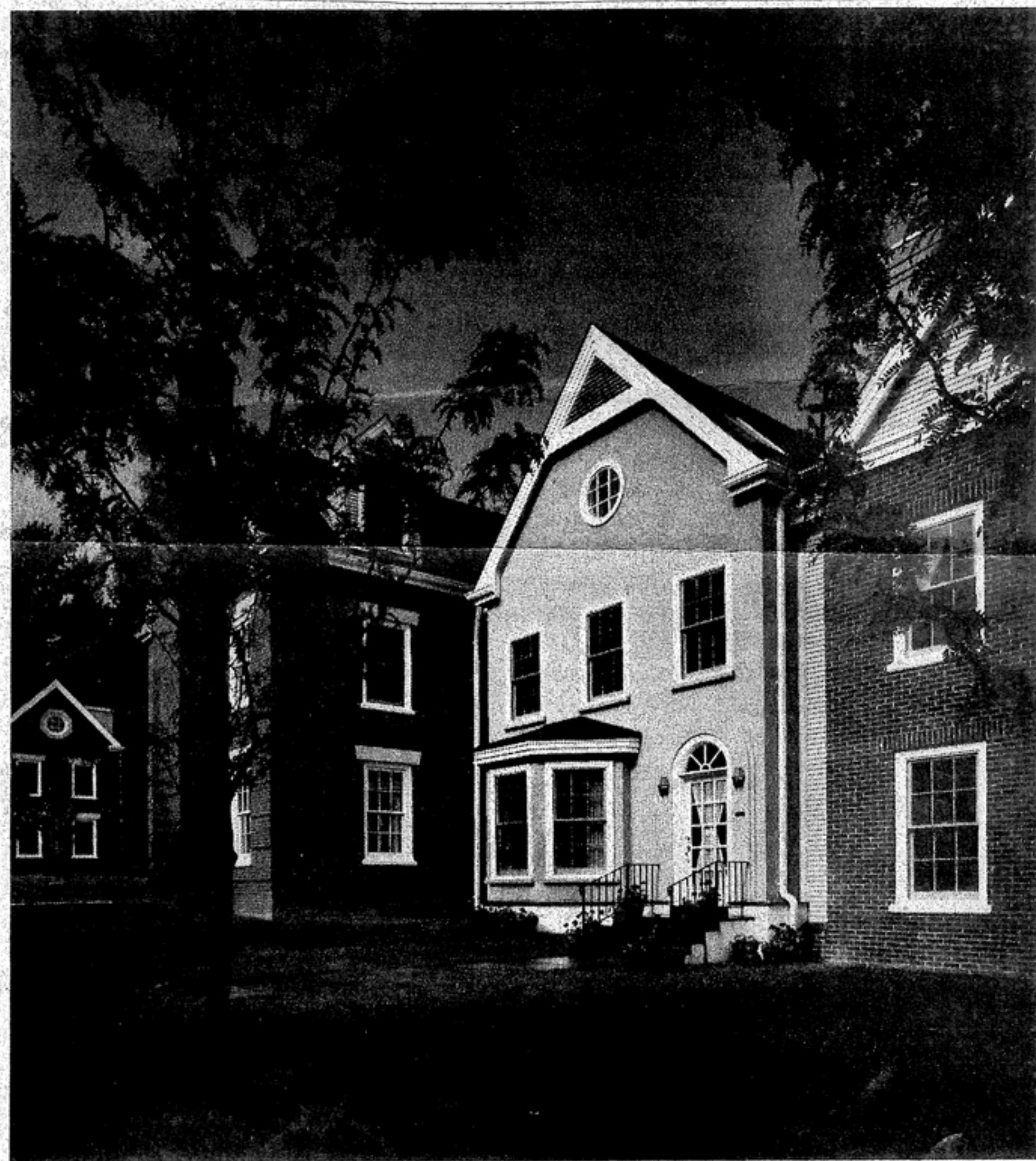
lines. Across the courtyard another is faced with pieces of limestone, in Louis XIV style. Still another exterior is textured stucco.

Traditional interior features—wood burning fireplaces with wood mantels, wood windows, natural finish oak floors and stair rails—repeat the Georgian theme, while high tech connections for se-

curity systems, central vacuuming, cable television, and smoke alarms provide contemporary convenience.

For residents who can bear to leave to go on vacations, a concierge looks after things at Governors Lane while they are away.

Marshall Real Estate has an office on site where brochures, floor plans, and tours are available.



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North of Princeton's Campus

From Timber to Town Houses in Three Short Centuries

The tract of forest and meadow in central New Jersey near Princeton first attracted the attention of eagle-eyed London speculators, John Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, in the 1650's; they acquired it from the Crown. Later, it was owned by William Penn, the Quaker leader, and, at the time of the Revolutionary War, it was the property of Richard Stockton, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The area had been used to grow timber and corn, but it in recent years it had lain fallow. Now town houses are sprouting on 20 acres of it.

The property, near the corner of Terhune Road and Harrison Street two miles due north of the Princeton University campus and a 30-minute walk from Princeton's commercial center, is the site of the Governors Lane development of 64 town houses, six of which are under construction. The three-story brick town houses of colonial design are being erected in three clusters, each with a courtyard.

There are five floor plans ranging from 2,800 to 3,300 square feet. Each offers four bedrooms, four bathrooms, two fireplaces, a two-car garage and a walled garden. Prices range from \$415,000 to \$525,000. The developer is Catalyst Properties of Princeton. Michael D. Giardino designed the project, which is due for completion in 1991.



By RICHARD D. LYONS

Rendering of town houses at Governors Lane development on Terhune Road, Princeton, N.J.

GOVERNORS LANE: "CLASSICALLY MODERN"

If terms such as townhouse development or planned community conjure up an image of uniform rows of cramped, add-n-stack units set in a miniature-golfcourse landscape, think again. Increasingly, designers and architects are providing economy without sacrificing quality.

Consider Governors Lane, a 65-unit development located on 20 wooded acres in Princeton, New Jersey. Governors Lane provides what architect and planner Michael Giardino, AIA, describes as "upscale housing for the middle-range buyer." As Giardino explains, "We're addressing the needs of people who want to stay in or return to the Princeton area but who don't need a large house or want the maintenance associated with owning a large piece of land. We've designed these houses so that people don't have to sell all their possessions in order to move in. The units may have fewer rooms, but those rooms are full-sized."

Buyers can select from five design options, ranging from 2800 to 3325 square feet and from \$450,000 to \$525,000 (the average price for a house in the area is about \$650,000,



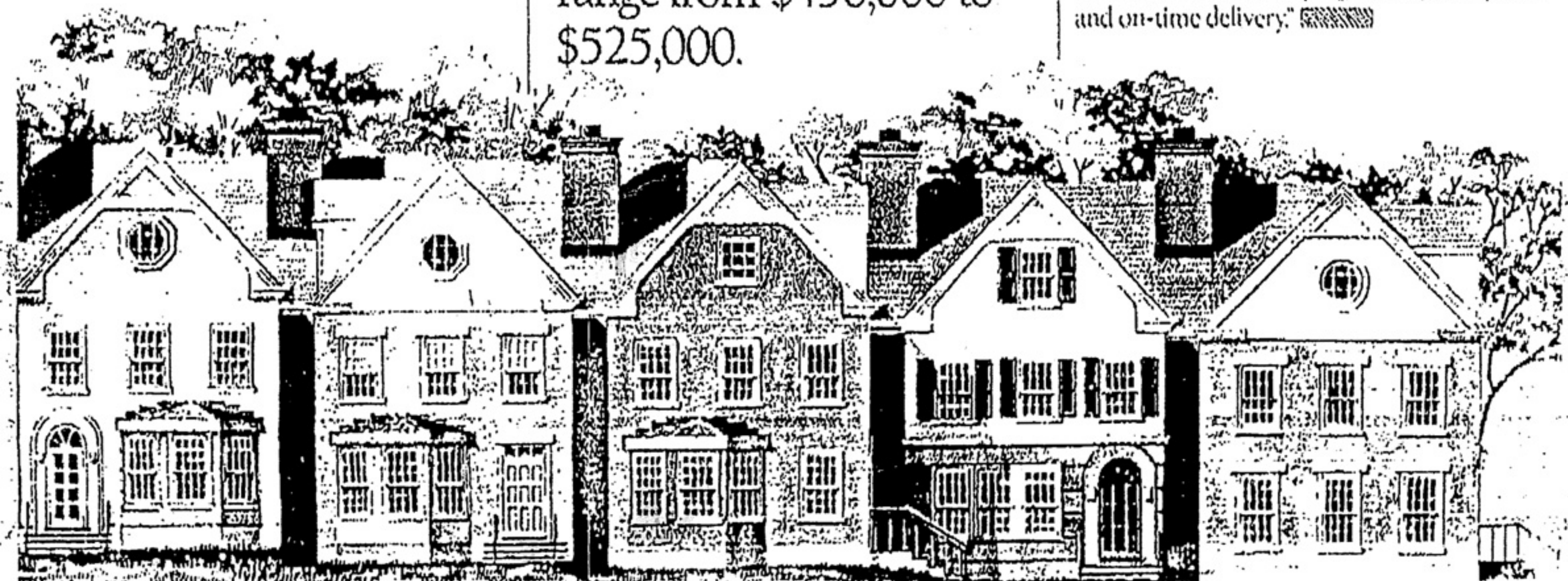
Governors Lane offers five design options, each of which combines modern amenities with a classic sense of style. Units range from \$450,000 to \$525,000.

Giardino says). Each of the three-story townhouses allows for variations in materials, detailing, and room arrangements. The "upscale" quality is achieved by combining classic elements of 17th and 18th century design with such contemporary amenities as stained oak hardwood flooring, Jacuzzi whirlpool baths, central air conditioning, and an enclosed garden space.

The units are grouped around three central garden courts, each of which includes a groundskeeper's residence. Construction of the first 25-unit phase began in midsummer 1988. Two additional 20-unit phases will proceed as sales are completed.

RIPCO materials were selected for the units' floor and roof sheathing because, as Giardino says, "Roseburg provides a good value, and the consistent high quality and durability of their products ensures the least amount of problems in the future."

Kim Coleman of Hamilton Supply in Trenton concurs: "I buy a lot of Roseburg materials and try to use as much of their sheathing material as possible. I picked Roseburg for this project because I knew they'd give me good quality and on-time delivery."



REAL ESTATE



Detached single-family houses at Governors Lane in Princeton Township are being offered from \$479,900.

Governors Lane offers new crop of single-family Georgian houses

Governors Lane in Princeton Township has unveiled its new collection of detached single family residences.

Georgian in design, these brick and stucco homes are set high up on a hill with a wooded backdrop.

The detached houses range from 3,143 to over 3,800 square feet.

They offer four or five bedrooms, two-car garages and such standard features as hardwood floors throughout and designer gourmet kitchens with custom cabinetry, Corian countertops, sub-zero refrigerators, cooktops, wall ovens and built-in microwaves. A master suite with an adjoining library/sitting room and bath is an integral feature of every home plan, as are

walled gardens and landscaping.

At Governors Lane there is an on-site caretaker, affording maintenance-free living. All exterior maintenance is taken care of for the Governors Lane homeowners (except for within the private walled gardens).

The second stage of construction at Governors Lane, which consists of 12 detached single family homes and 22 attached Georgian courtyard homes, is being designed and built under the direction of award-winning developer and builder Peter Blicher of Pennington Properties. Mr. Blicher has built many custom-home communities in the Princeton area.

The Governors Lane is open Satur-

day and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. and Monday and Wednesday from 1-4 p.m. To visit governors Lane, travel on North Harrison Street to Terhune Road to Governors Lane on the left.

For more information or an appointment, call Christine Short at (609) 683-7272. The detached single family homes at Governors Lane are now being offered at pre-construction prices ranging from \$479,900 to the mid \$500,000s. The attached courtyard homes are priced from \$400,000 to \$525,000 and offer from 3,300 to 4,000 square feet of living space with four bedrooms. Reservation deposits are currently being accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.