

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY



PURE TEXAS

KISSING TREE IN SAN MARCOS

When it comes to golf courses, bigger is not always better. That's especially true at Kissing Tree in San Marcos, Texas, where Brookfield Residential Properties, the developer of this active adult community for residents age 55 and older, built a course that maxes out at 6,522 yards. It's just one example of why Kissing Tree — more about that name later — has gained plenty of momentum since opening its doors in 2018.

"In a day where the trend is going to 7,400-yard courses with three par 5s over 600 yards, we went the other direction because of our customers," said Dirk Gosda, president, Texas Brookfield Residential. Those same customers are also interested

in a variety of activities. Hence the creation of Kissing Tree's 20-acre amenity campus, known as The Mix. It currently features eight pickleball courts (with plans for 10 more), six bocce courts lit for night play, an 18-hole artificial grass putting course, and Independence Hall, a social building that includes an indoor and outdoor bar.

Unlike other adult communities, Kissing Tree does not have one central clubhouse. Instead, there's more of a college campus feel thanks to a cluster of various structures. The next phase of construction will introduce a two-story fitness center and indoor/outdoor pool area.

The growing community has plans for approximately 2,500 homes on the 1,300-acre property.

Sizes range from 1,400 to 3,400 square feet, with prices starting at just under \$300,000 and up to over \$1 million. Styles include Modern Farmhouse, Texas Hill Country, Contemporary, Traditional Brick, and Santa Barbara Stucco, and each feature five very different elevation heights, five different color choices, and multiple floor plans.

Although still in its infancy, Kissing Tree already exudes a welcoming vibe. "People come here looking for a house and fall in love with the lifestyle," said Gosda. "One woman who had lived elsewhere for 21 years told me, 'I've been at Kissing Tree for about two months, and don't even live there full time yet, but I know more people here than in my old neighborhood.' That sums up what we are trying to build here."

Texas native Gary Stephenson designed an engaging par-72 layout (open to the public in addition to residents) that follows a landscape of rolling terrain, not surprising given Kissing Tree's location on the eastern edge of Hill Country. "We built this course with the intention

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of making it fun for any level of golfer," said Josh Clay, general manager of Kissing Tree Golf Club. "We will have a lot of residents coming back to the game or who have never played before, but we also kept in mind the better golfer so they can still enjoy it. Gary created elevated tees, few forces carries, generous fairways (many 40 yards or wider), and subtle greens."

Both nines end with drivable downhill par 4s (289 yards and 321 yards from the tips), albeit each with water in play around the green. "We did that because it's exciting, but also because nine-hole golf will be a big part of the community," said Clay. "We wanted to give those people the same level of entertainment on



both sides of the course." The layout will be tested by some of the best women college golfers this October when it hosts the Jim West Challenge, featuring 15 Division 1 teams from around the country. The host school will be nearby Texas State University, and its almost 500-acre campus is just one reason why *Forbes* named San Marcos the "Best Place to Retire in Texas" last year.

Location helped, too. The city is just 31 miles south of Austin and 49 miles north of San Antonio, with Houston less than three hours to the east. The San Marcos Outlet Premium Shops are just a mile away, while close by in New Braunfels is the Gruene (pronounced "Green") Historic District, with a variety of dining options, eclectic shopping, and live music at the famous Gruene Hall, which dates back to 1878.

As for the Kissing Tree name? It's pure Texas. The story goes that in 1857, U.S. Senator Sam Houston visited San Marcos while running for governor. In appreciation of his appearance, a local women's sewing club welcomed him with a hand-stitched state flag. He liked it so much that he gave each of the ladies a kiss on the cheek under an oak tree next to the San Marcos River. More than 150 years later, residents of Kissing Tree are experiencing their own Texas-style welcome ... kissing optional. ■



AT-A-GLANCE

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