



### Minnesota development boldly focuses on Modernist design

Mayo Woodlands, a unique residential development featuring Modernist-style homes on a wooded bluff overlooking the Zumbro River Valley near Rochester, Minnesota, is now taking shape. One hundred twenty innovative homes will be built on the 220-acre site.

Five homes are slated for construction this year, while phase I (60 houses) is expected to be done by 2006, and the entire development is projected for completion by 2010.

The land once belonged to Dr. Charles Mayo, cofounder of the Mayo Clinic, who was known for

sitting in a field of prairie grass with optimum views of the unspoiled fields, meadows, and forest. No house is wider than 24 feet, and although each will have a different design, they share a common vocabulary—wood and stucco for exteriors, with metal roofs. The first completed home has floor-to-ceiling windows on the main level and a midnight-purple, detached three-stall garage.

“There are no architectural precedents up there. We used the classical elements in the barns in these Modern designs,” says Shane Coen. Tim Alt adds that the plan was to break away from trends in today’s housing developments: “We wanted them to be distinct from the New Urbanists’ more traditional designs,” he says.

The design team divided the plan into three distinct neighborhoods: the Village, the largest parcel, on flat, formerly cultivated land suitable for ¼-acre lots; the Prairie, gently rolling land bordered by trees, designed for 2- to 4-acre lots; and the Forest, a smaller, heavily wooded area overlooking the valley, best for the largest lots. To erase lot lines in the Village, designers planted tall prairie grasses throughout and, for privacy, added 1,000 pines east to west like traditional farm windbreaks.

To date, reaction to Mayo Woodlands’ innovative, even revolutionary design, is mixed. Traditionally, the area around Rochester in southeastern Minnesota is conservative, yet the constant influx of professionals from all over the world is seen as a plus. “They find it really interesting, others are critical. I find that when you raise the bar above the norm, the critics come out. Our challenge is to provide new solutions that are viewed as opportunities,” says Coen. All three designers are hopeful that as people continue to visit the site, they will recognize that houses here are actually part of the landscape.

*Bette Hammel*



**Modernist houses at Mayo Woodlands (top and above) have drawn both critical raves and scorn.**

his progressive thinking. The property now belongs to Mayo’s six grandchildren.

Reflecting on the family’s heritage of innovation in medicine and agriculture, the Mayo heirs brought in landscape architect Shane Coen of Coen + Partners, Minneapolis, to enhance a plan originally developed by local engineers. Coen has assembled a forward-thinking design team including David Salmela, of Salmela Architect, Duluth, Minnesota, and Tim Alt, of ALTUS Architecture, residential specialists, Minneapolis. “Our task was to make this more progressive and up-to-date,” says Salmela.

Each house in the complex is purposely Modern and light-filled, with a Midwest farm character, yet sparked by original, emphatically Modern features like smooth lines, lack of adornment, and boxy shapes. Most appear to be