

# Sugar land, how 'sweet' it is

*The Spencer Company's award-winning landscape services make the New Territory development just outside Houston a special place to live.*

by RON HALL/ Managing Editor

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arry Anderson, who grew up there, remembers when Sugar Land, Texas, only had about 2,000 people. Now, he's landscape supervisor for a master planned community within that onetime tiny Houston suburb that, by itself, has 3,500 homes, with more to be built. Sugar Land may have 80,000 people, and one of its landscape showcases is also Anderson's employer—the New Territory development, 3,100 acres of beautiful new homes, parks and landscapes.

Specifically, Anderson works for Markborough Development Co., the developer of New Territory. In that capacity he works closely with The Spencer Company, a 38-year-old company specializing in corporate horticultural services. The Spencer Company is based in nearby Houston.

The relationship has been mutually beneficial. For New Territory, the benefits of high-quality landscape services are obvious, says Anderson. Besides

adding to residents' quality of life, the landscaping improves New Territory's marketing.

The Spencer Company, for its part, has been honored each of the past four years with environmental improvement awards for its work at the exclusive community.

"There is landscaping everywhere in the development," says Lupe Gallardo, The Spencer Company's project manager at New Territory. "Everything here is done first class. Standards are very high."

Gallardo oversees the landscape management operations at the development. He works independently but cooperatively with the developer's representative Anderson. Their chief concern is quality control.

The Spencer Company operates from a satellite facility at New Territory. From there Gallardo organizes the daily schedule for about 24 employees. He relies on Juan Salazar to head maintenance crews, Julian Gamino to spearhead detail work, and John Endres to maintain the community's irrigation system. The work is year-round, although seasonal to some extent.

"In the winter we do a lot of mulching, and we prune the crepe myrtles," says Gallardo. There are over 1600 crepe myrtles. The Spencer Company also installs the outdoor holiday decorations for New Territory, a service it's been providing Houston-area businesses since 1984, says President Gre-



**Gregory Spencer, as a kid, started working at the company his dad began in 1959. As its president the past 17 years he's guided it through Houston's boom and bust economy.**

**The Spencer Company adds to the color of New Territory by providing residents with flowers.**



gory Spencer.

Gregory's father started The Spencer Company in 1959, and Gregory became sole owner in 1982. Recently he took on two employees as partners. Brad Wander serves as vice president of Spencer Outdoor and Diana Rolke as vice president of Spencer Florabunda.

Specializing in landscape management in the 1960s, The Spencer Company expanded its services during Houston's office-building boom in the 1970s. In addition to exterior landscape, it developed a tropical plant business along with what became Houston's largest interiorscape service which Gregory sold to Rentokil in 1993.

But, Houston's boom times, because they're tied so closely to oil, sometimes give way to Houston bust times. Gregory Spencer says he's been through the cycle several times. That's why he wants to keep his company nimble.

"The focus of our company will be dictated somewhat by the market itself," he explains, "but also by what we as a company do well, have fun and make money at." And that, through the 1990s, has included a lot of landscape management for high-end commercial properties.

The New Territory contract includes fertilizing and pest control for 252 acres of manicured turf, most of it bermudagrass but over 30 acres of buffalograss too. Gallardo says his crews mow with John Deere riding and walk-behind units, and they use Echo hand-held



power tools for trimming and blowing. Included are 50 acres of lakes, 10 acres of athletic fields, three recreation centers and more than 30 acres of parks. Serious mowing begins in March and doesn't slow until the bermudagrass starts going dormant again in the fall.

Add 10 acres of shrubs and ground-cover beds, more than 8,000 trees and 53 miles of edging (curbs and sidewalks) and Gallardo himself wonders how his crews can get it all done, and still provide such a high level of service, particularly this past winter and early spring.

"The biggest challenge has been the weather we've had here in this part of Texas," says Larry Anderson. "For the past year and a half, until about Christmas, we'd had nothing but drought. But since Christmas we've had nothing but rain."

**Over 50 acres of lakes make New Territory a special place to live, but they're a real challenge to maintain.**

While The Spencer Company provides services typical of many landscape management companies, it provides some that aren't. For instance, it maintains a "utility crew" onsite that provides a range of services from storm water pollution control to street cleaning.

Also, twice each year it offers New Territory residents the opportunity to purchase annual color plants, fertilizer and mulch at wholesale prices.

Says Project Supervisor Gallardo, "as this projects keeps developing and getting larger, our work grows too." □



As the New Territory planned community continues to grow, The Spencer Company's landscape management responsibilities expand.