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## [New Gulf-Coast Subdivisions are Designed To Take a Beating](#)

September 1, 2006

While the natural force of hurricanes can be devastating, much of the property damage caused by storms comes from debris flying off nearby buildings.

Armed with this knowledge, real estate investors are transforming swaths of land into hurricane-fortified developments whose scale is unprecedented. To be truly safe, the thinking goes, not only must individual homes be heavily reinforced for potential disaster, but all of the surrounding homes must withstand wind and flooding, too.

Jim Hayes, founding principal of Crown Team Texas, recently acquired 9,000 acres of coastal land 70 miles southeast of Houston for multiple housing developments along with permanent nature reserves. One of those parcels will be developed as Audubon Village, a project that is currently underway. "If you're going to build in this area, you've got to build a better product," Hayes says. Each of the 600 residential units are built on concrete stilts and designed to withstand 130-mile-per-hour winds.

Hayes adds, "Even with the hazards and the potential for disaster, people want to be on the water."

Alys Beach, a development on the northwest coast of Florida, is similarly fortified, but designed using new-urbanist principles and furthermore is inspired by Bermudan architecture. This 158-acre development will ultimately comprise 900 residential units, according to town architect Marieanne Khoury-Vogt. Buildings will be all-masonry construction with impact-resistant doors and windows. "It has to be that way, otherwise there could be total devastation," Khoury-Vogt says.

Both developments are certified by the Tampa-based Institute for Business and Home Safety. Chuck Vance, program manager at the institute, explains that building codes are the bare minimum for safety, so his organization seeks to raise that threshold. Since the institute's launch in October 2000, the certification has been implemented in 11 states and in over 1,500 homes.

*John Gendall*

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