

Portasol is an eco-community in Portalón de Aguirre that combines low-density real estate development with a commitment to sustainability

## Exemplary Community

83% of the 540 hectares that make up this project will be kept green

### **Karen Retana**

In Portalón de Aguirre, between the Manuel Antonio National Park (Quepos) and the Marino Ballena National Park (Dominical), an exemplary community is being built according to a contemporary and innovative environmental conservation concept that provides its residents and collaborators with a high quality of life.

The project consists of a 540 hectare property where its exuberant rain forest stands out. The land was acquired more than 35 years ago by a visionary Costa Rican named Carlos Piedra Mata, who left this Earth just two months ago.

Carlos Piedra truly enjoyed his life. He saw his property be developed with great commitment to the environment. Proof of this is that an area, of no less than 83%, will remain just as it has for the last three decades.

The project is called Portasol. It is located in Portalón de Aguirre in the Province of Puntarenas, 20 kilometers southwest of Quepos, or 18 kilometers northwest of Dominical.

Portasol is a low-density community situated in the rain forest. The project will soon begin its fifth stage. Fifty lots have been placed on the market. They represent only 18% of the total project area.

A maximum of 200 lots will be offered. They will have a minimum size of 5 thousand square meters, of which only 15% can have constructions.

“Land use restrictions, along with other building and coexistence regulations, are one aspect that is under internal control. They are regulated and inscribed in the Costa Rican Public Registry,” said Sylvia Rivera, the Project’s Marketing Manager.

Portasol offers properties situated on the riverbanks of the Río Portalón to current and future residents. Likewise, some of these properties are next to a private reserve or conservation area that Portasol has set aside within its property.

Everyday life at Portasol is characterized by spectacular views of the ocean and the mountains, where various species of flora and fauna, viewpoints, parks and trails to wonderful sites coexist.

Due to its characteristics, the project allows outdoor activities to be carried out and relaxation in the spa and bungalows. These are categorized as a unique lodging experience because the murmuring of the Río Portalón and the toucans' song can be heard from them.

### **A vision of responsibility within the field of real estate**

Portasol has a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy, which is based on three main topics. They are environment and conservation, human development, and the development of local micro-businesses.

“At Portasol, we firmly believe that CSR plays an indispensable, supportive role, which every business that encourages sustainable development must play. Sustainable development should be understood as economic growth that is balanced with social well-being, responsible use of natural resources and protection of the environment,” explained Rivera.

Various programs can be found among the actions that the business takes regarding this topic. One of these is the entrepreneurship course through which some 45 students older than 15 from Portalón and nearby communities benefited. This course prepared them to be future micro-business people, and it contributed to the management of a business idea as well as to starting one's own business.

This type of initiative can be added to others, such as the training of women from the area, some of which have become providers to the project. Donations to the community's school as well as to public infrastructure, waste collection and recycling projects also stand out.

### **Going Carbon Neutral**

The carbon neutral program is one of the initiatives taken to meet the first objective of the central theme regarding Portasol's Corporate Social Responsibility policy. It consists of keeping an active environmental protection and conservation program on the project.

This program is founded on setting aside 100 hectares of rain forest to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in order to counteract greenhouse gas emissions.

“This program allows us to be carbon neutral. In other words, it gives us the possibility of capturing the atmospheric carbon dioxide that we produce on a daily basis by fixing it in the wood of the forest that we protect, and therefore, neutralizing it,” stated Rivera.

### **Awards and Recognitions**

- In November of 2006, Portasol was honored with the René Frank Real Estate Development Award by the Costa Rican Chamber of Real Estate in the Open Subdivision and Tourism category.
- In August of 2008, SETENA (National Technical Environmental Secretariat) awarded Portasol for its fulfillment of environmental commitments.

- The Administrative Environmental Board categorized Portasol as an example of a project that is doing things well. Well means not only having all environmental, municipal and building documents in order and fulfilling all the environmental commitments made, but also going above and beyond what is expected.

### **Picture Captions**

Page 24 – Restricted land use is one regulated aspect at Portasol. Likewise, the use of recycled and non-contaminating materials is common on the project.

Page 25 – Visitors can rest comfortably in bungalows like this one.

Page 26 – The Portalón de Aguirre area is rich in nature and spectacular views of the ocean and the mountains, where various species of flora and fauna, viewpoints, parks and trails coexist.