

New Condo Units Offer Healthy-built Urban Style With Easy Living



By Marie Bartlett

With the term "green building" becoming an increasingly common buzz word in the western NC real estate market, there is one place that combines the elements of environmentally friendly homes with the concept of urban living at its best. Skyloft Asheville, with 69-unit one, two and three bedroom condos, are the first of their kind to grace the downtown landscape. Currently under construction on Beaucatcher Mountain, within walking distance to Asheville, the loft-like units are scheduled for completion this fall.

Developer Mike Farmer and his Skyloft team, daughter Jenny Farmer and Asheville architect Robert Todd, said that when they presented their proposal to city council for approval, they learned of four things residents want in a downtown development.

"First, they requested affordable housing, so we have classified ten percent of our units under the guideline," said Farmer. "They wanted green space around the development. We will have 30 percent more green area than the

city required. They wanted certified Healthy-built construction, and finally they wanted connectivity to local transportation. We have provided all of these things."

Asheville City Council has since called the eco-development "a model for our city." In essence, says Architect Robert Todd, Skyloft's appeal is a combination of great location, artistic style built in, eco-friendly high quality construction, and affordability.

"No private developer has done what we're doing, by going into an established neighborhood, an under-utilized property, and maximizing its use. We've generated an opportunity for people to be part of vibrant downtown Asheville, and in the process created a balance: Condos built from quality materials with upgrades included that a wide range of people can afford."

Skyloft is certified by the state as Healthy-built, meaning that it meets certain requirements that result in energy and water reduction, in addition to protecting the environment before, during, and after the construction

process. While "green building" is not unique nationwide, it is still a fairly new concept in western NC, albeit one that is becoming increasingly common.

And the benefits are numerous.

"From an end-user perspective," says Skyloft co-developer Jenny Farmer, who plans to live in one of the units with her children, "having a healthy environment is simply the right thing to do for your family. There is also the substantial savings involved in energy costs."

Architect Robert Todd says the long-term effect of constructing "green" is huge since the building industry is among the largest energy consumers.

"A few smart selections in the early process of design can have a major impact over the fifty to one hundred year lifespan of a building. It also allows us to protect one of the draws that bring people to Asheville, which is our mountains."

From the builder or developer's perspective, green building doesn't require a great deal of extra effort or cost. Nationally, additional cost for builders averages two to four percent.

At Skyloft, among the green built elements are: Exterior doors insulated to a higher-than-average energy rating, energy-efficient appliances, high indoor air quality, recyclable materials both interior and exterior including bamboo and cork flooring, plantings of native shrubs, formaldehyde-free insulation, and termiticide treatment using low toxicity chemicals.

"As a builder/developer it's simply a matter of doing the right thing," says Mike Farmer. "Since we incorporate the green changes into the building process, and it doesn't take that much effort, why not?" He says that since construction of each unit is modular, by its very nature there is little waste involved. Each component is cut to precision, reducing excess material, and each unit self-contained, resulting in better sound barriers.

Standard in each unit at Skyloft are con-

crete countertops designed by local artisans, upgraded fixtures, bamboo flooring, open balconies, and other features designed for simplicity of lifestyle.

"You will just walk in, see a beautiful room, and want to live in it," says Mike Farmer. Benefits to homeowners include a healthier, more comfortable interior, a discount on electric bills from most energy companies, state and federal tax credits, and overall reduced air pollution.

Site agent Patti Haberstock, who has more than a dozen years experience selling condo units for Beverly-Hanks, says a green-built home also has better resale value.

"This is especially true with newcomers who move here expecting a more environmentally-friendly atmosphere." She believes there is a bright future ahead for condo development in Asheville.

"Condo living is a lifestyle. At Skyloft, we are generating an opportunity for people to be part of a vibrant downtown. And since Asheville is rated as one of the top-rated destinations to live, I think buyers are more likely to want to something they can lock and go."

Don't forget the green advantage in resale, says Mike Farmer

"Healthy-built resonates with people who move to western North Carolina. As a developer, that's a real plus. At the same time, I feel good about the fact that we are doing something for the environment."

General contractor for Skyloft is Matt Holloway. "I trust him implicitly to do a good job," says Farmer. "In fact, the excellent team that I have is the critical factor in our success." For more information on Skyloft, contact the Sales Center at 828.258.1599, or visit the website at www.skyloftasheville.com. Sales center hours are Tue - Sat 11:00 am - 5:00 pm, Sundays 1 pm - 4 pm. The Sale Center is located on Alexander Drive off Martin Luther King Drive in downtown Asheville.