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Live/work units to offer flexibility

Web-posted Sep 9, 2004

By DOUG HENZE
Of The Daily Oakland Press

Reminiscent of the days when shopkeepers lived above their stores, a village-style, live/work development - among the first in metro Detroit - is under way.

The Terra Land Group, based in Novi, is building the 70-unit Legato Point on the north side of Maple Road west of Pontiac Trail. The project will include 35 condominiums and 35 live/work units, which have businesses on the ground floor and residences above.

A model is expected to be open in February, and Terra projects the five-building development will be built out by the end of next year.

"We saw it as a growing trend," said Aaron Tassell, director of planning and marketing for Terra, said of the live/work project. "You see it going on in Atlanta and other parts of the country."

Novi-based Crosswinds Communities is building a similar concept, called Eton Street Station, on Eton Street in Birmingham, on the former Erb Lumber Co. headquarters site.

Terra representatives were introduced to the concept while attending the International Builders Show in Atlanta, where a warehouse had been converted to live/work units, Tassell said.

Terra also is the developer of Town Commons in Howell, which features first floor retail and second and third floor apartments.

Work on Legato Point's foundation was expected to begin this week.

Live/work units at the Walled Lake development will range from 1,590 square feet to 1,670 square feet and start at \$183,900. The 1,381-square-foot condos, to be built on the top floor of each three-story building, will start at \$159,900.

Terra is offering flexibility in use of the two-floor live/work units.

"You can use the first floor and the second floor for work," Tassell said. "You can use both spaces as living if you want."

Businesses at Legato Point will have to follow Walled Lake's home occupation guidelines. A law office or a dental practice would be allowed, but a light industrial operation would be prohibited.

"They're set up so you can have a small cafe in there," Tassell said. "You couldn't have a pizzeria in here because we don't have proper ventilation to do that."

Each unit at Legato Point will have a two-car garage, located in the back. The exterior will be a combination of wood siding and brick.

The four-acre development site once was a ball field that was part of the former Walled Lake High School, before an extension of Maple Road cut the property in half. The city's Downtown Development Authority put out a request for proposals for the land in 2002, and Terra's proposal was selected.

"We knew that Walled Lake is a growing area," Tassell said, explaining why the developer chose the city for its live/work project. "You've got development all over since they expanded (the M-5 highway).

"We started sales about a month ago, and we've gotten 18 reservations so far."

John Swantek, director of planning and the building official for Walled Lake, said he expects Legato Point to bring into the city professionals, possibly including architects, engineers, and art gallery owners.

"We're looking very much forward to its completion," he said. "The design is very attractive and something that will enhance our city."

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