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Eco-friendly community set for prime area

The Business Journal of Phoenix - by [Ty Young](#) The Business Journal

A local developer has been given the green light to build a 36-unit residential community in the Camelback Corridor, blending environmental technologies -- including standard solar panels -- into what he calls the latest in luxury living.

The project, called Aura at Camelback, is the first residential effort for Chad Gifford, founder of Phoenix-based **Catalyst Communities**.

Three apartment structures in the area will be demolished to make way for the condominiums. Apartment residents have been notified of the plan and will receive \$200 in moving expenses and full refunds on their deposits.

Catalyst Communities, which is dedicated to environmentally friendly building, is designing the project to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, standards -- a design, construction and operational rating system created by the United States Green Building Council.

Gifford is working on the project, located at the southwest corner of 25th Street and Campbell Avenue, with Phoenix architecture firm Senior Rae Kristoff Architecture.

The Camelback East Village Planning Committee approved the project in June. City planners are working with Gifford to shore up additional zoning issues.

"We did not have any opposition, which for a residential project is very unusual," said Camelback East Village Planner Katherine Coles. "In the Camelback East Valley corridor, there have been some proposals with LEED designs, but this is the one that may end up being built."

Homes are expected to sell for \$800,000 to \$1 million in the 2.2-acre development. The five floor plans range from 2,450 to 3,300 square feet and are up to three levels. The project will begin in March and is expected to open to residents by mid-2009.

Underground parking, recycled building products, xeriscape vegetation, low-flow shower heads, redundant hot water systems, and dual-flush toilets are among features planned for the homes. Residents will have elevators to take them up from the garage, built below grade to reduce atmospheric carbon emissions, Gifford said.

"We're really, as a society, coming into a tough situation with global warming and exploding energy prices," he said. "This project is designed to respond to these issues in a way that is cost-effective."

Each home will have a solar system provided free by Phoenix-based solar panel company Agenera LLC. The system is designed to use solar electricity during the day and the electrical grid at night.

Residents will receive credit for any surplus electricity their 4-kilowatt systems provide, potentially giving home owners a surplus of electricity, said Mike Eisele, Agenera president and chief executive.

"Basically, it allows users to pay as they go and actually sell electricity back to (Salt River Project)," he said. SRP is the utility provider for the property.

When completed, the units will qualify as U.S. Department of Energy Zero Energy Homes.

Among the many green technologies integrated into the homes, the solar system is what will attract the most interest, Gifford said.

The system is built into each home from the start, removing the option from home buyers who may not want a solar system. But because there is no additional cost, a new industry standard and expectation could be set for future housing developments, Gifford said.

U.S. Green Building Council: www.usgbc.org

U.S. Department of Energy: www.energy.gov

Agenera LLC: www.agenera.com

Catalyst Communities: www.catalyst-communities.com

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