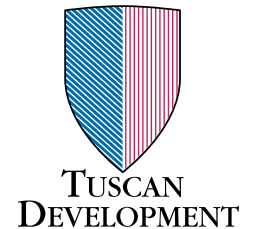


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By DOUG SMITH, Staff Writer
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TUSCAN PLANS SMALL CONDOS UPTOWN FOR UNDER \$100,000

Charlotte's First Ward neighborhood is getting a condominium project that offers buyers some of the most affordable new homes yet in uptown's residential resurgence.

Tuscan Development plans 93 condos ranging from \$99,000 to \$175,000 in what has been designated the Garden District, which extends from Caldwell and Eighth streets to the John Belk Freeway in the northeast corner of First Ward.

The \$15 million project, called Tivoli condominiums, is due to be started in mid-August and take seven to eight months to finish.

It will share space in the Garden District with more proposed townhomes and single-family houses. Together, the projects are expected to total \$44 million.

The Garden District is part of a massive effort that's reshaping the once sprawling Earle Village public housing project into a community of mixed housing types and price ranges.

First Ward Place opened two years ago, replacing Earle Village. The Caldwells on Ninth, 32 townhomes facing Ninth Street Linear Park, sold out at prices ranging from \$139,900 to \$163,900 and is under construction.

Banc of America Community Development Corp. assembled the land and worked with the city to reconfigure First Ward streets. Land was sold to developers at prices designed to encourage housing variety.

Nancy Crown, community development senior vice president, said, "We're extremely happy with what's being developed in the Garden District."

Tivoli will feature nine one- and two-bedroom floor plans in six brick buildings. Units range from 690 to 1,350 square feet.

Developers Ray Farris III and James Cole, partners in Tuscan Development, say the condos will be unusual. Buyers who commit before construction starts can choose traditional walls, movable dividers or loftlike open spaces.

"Sunlight will dazzle because no high rises will block the light," Farris said. Condos will have 10-foot ceilings and large windows to exploit light, and about half the flats in the three-story buildings will be end units with windows on more than one side, he said.

The lay of the land and sun exposure inspired the name.

"Think of the famous hillside gardens at Villa d'Este in Tivoli, near Rome," Farris said. "The slope of the land meant we could use a step-down exterior style that incorporates Italian urban elements such as crowned flat roofs, wrought iron accents, balconies and window boxes."

Landcraft Properties and former City Council member Ron Leeper are working with Tuscan Development to develop Tivoli. FMK Architects designed the project, and ColeJenest & Stone did the land planning. A Crosland Group division will construct it.

Helen Adams Realty is the project's exclusive broker.

The developers say, in a sense, the Garden District is returning First Ward to the way it was in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when it was a diverse neighborhood.

The decline began in the 1930s, they say, when lenders favored suburban development and held back on lending for inner-city improvements. Urban renewal claimed hundreds of homes and businesses in the late 1950s.

Most of the public housing was constructed there in the 1960s.

"A goal of converting from Earle Village to the Garden District was to get a price mix, and Tivoli enables us to do that," Leeper said.
