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Newark group touts new 'green' buildings

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Theresa Hooper Marshall helped create the Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District with one goal in mind: to revitalize a neglected historic neighborhood in Newark.

In doing so, the group is creating one of the nation's first urban eco-villages, with solar power, bamboo flooring and recycled-glass countertops.

Yesterday, the LPCCD held an open house to unveil the first section of its Lincoln Park redevelopment project -- the Washington Street Mixed Use Buildings.

The new buildings will be the only structures in Newark recognized by the United States Green Building Council for their environmentally friendly features and construction materials.

"The idea around the redevelopment of Lincoln Park was really centered on creating a community that was pedestrian-oriented, that was mixed-use, mixed-income, green and with an arts and culture district that could bring people back into the city of Newark," said Baye Adofo-Wilson, executive director of the LPCCD.

The \$4 million development consists of six 3,221-square-foot buildings, offering two residential units and commercial space on the first floor of each. Wilson said he expects the buildings to be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold-certified. LEED is a rating system that provides standards for environmentally sustainable construction.

They may appear average from the outside, but the Washington Street buildings are green on the inside. The buildings offer a long list of green design features, including Energy Star windows and appliances, paints and adhesives low in volatile organic compounds, recycled carpet and 1.8-kilowatt solar panels on the rooftop of each building that will supply residents with 40 percent to 50 percent of their total energy needs.

Each four-story building is priced at \$650,000. Wilson said five buyers have already expressed interest in the buildings, and he expects the rest of the units to go within the next week.

Ideally, the buyer would live in the two-bedroom, loft-style apartment on top, rent out the one-bedroom unit in the middle and lease the ground floor to a business or use it as an office, Wilson said.

In total, the LPCCD is planning to build 300 LEED-certified units in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. Carmen Rainieri, board member of the Green Building Council's New Jersey chapter, said he is happy that the LPCCD is embracing eco-friendly development on a large scale.

"They're trend-setters. What they've proved is that building green is affordable, and they've carried out their vision," Rainieri said. "I think there's going to be a lot of neighborhoods throughout the country that will be using Newark as an example."

Among the crowd at the press conference was jazz saxophonist James Moody. The headliner for today's Lincoln Park Music Festival, Moody stood before the audience and recalled growing up in a segregated Newark. Having lived in Pennington Court, Moody, now 83, showed his enthusiasm for the Lincoln Park redevelopment.

"To see this in Newark compared to what I saw before," Moody marveled. "All I can say is, Wow!"

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