

Design should connect and enhance communities

Multifamily housing is a perpetual challenge met with a variety of strategies, from postwar rent control in New York City to the mega projects of the mid-20th century, and just about everything in between. We have gone through eras of centralizing and decentralizing, of density and sprawl. Heavy-handed systems in the former U.S.S.R. and now in China use housing as a form of collective control, whereas the American objectives focused on the pursuit of individual happiness while contending with the realities of managing post-industrial revolution migrations.

The historical examples tend to trend with prevailing urban planning thinking, from prewar garden communities to modernist towers in a park. We are in a new era of housing in cities, as cities regain favor as places to work and live. Multifamily housing projects include everything from single-lot prototypes and micro units, to large developments that explore new relationships with community. While there is much history to draw from, challenges continue to evolve with the complexities and variables of societies.

The architects' goal for all housing – multifamily and otherwise – should be to create quality living environments. Healthy societies grow from within and start with the conditions of habitation. The first priority in planning housing is location. Cities serve as vital amenities to individual neighborhoods



Stephen Dynia, FAIA
Principal, Dynia Architects, Jackson, Wyoming and Denver

and connect us as a community. With mass transportation making a comeback, connectivity is broadly addressed. Urban developments should focus on proximity to transportation and walkability.

Another critical objective is demographic diversity within housing developments

and, by extension, within neighborhoods. The intermingling of people in different phases of life and in alternate modes of living adds richness to our daily lives. Economic diversity also is an objective – avoiding the creation of ghettos for singular economic categories helps soften economic castes. Although as a discipline, architecture has at times overstepped its boundaries regarding social engineering in the modern era, it is an inevitable component of social change, and it is our obligation as architects to inspire communities to move housing development in a positive direction.

As designers, we have a leadership responsibility to work with developers and municipalities to locate development sites and create housing that achieves these goals. The most-effective way of implementing change is through example, so I have included the recently completed Freight Resi-



Dynia Architects

Green space is a vital part of successful multifamily design. At Freight Residences, private garden patios are featured on the ground floor.

dences project on the Taxi campus in River North to illustrate the following points:

- Effective site planning should connect housing to the broader community as well as create collective and private amenity spaces within, such as private gardens. Although the amenities of the Taxi campus are extensive, a pedestrian bridge over the Platte River will provide access to The Source, The Source Hotel and Market Hall, and other business along the Brighton Boulevard corridor.

- Environmental considerations, such as sun and prevailing weather, inform a project configuration and enhance livability. Each unit features an operable glass garage door that opens the living spaces to the gardens on the first floor, generous private balconies on the fourth floor and to mountain views to the west from the third floor. In addition, the utilization of day lighting and natu-

ral ventilation has positive health benefits while reducing energy costs.

- Amenity spaces and programming play a key role in the social environment of a housing project. These spaces should go beyond the standard communal gym to include educational spaces with programs for and by the residents, community gardens with advisers to promote healthy eating, communal kitchens and outdoor cinemas. Unique to Freight Residences is a community recreation room, designed as a learning and play space.

- Innovative building design considers circulation strategies that go beyond the standard double-loaded corridors to create entry conditions with individuality and a sense of privacy, which can make an apartment unit feel like a private home. At Freight Residences, stacked,

Please see 'Dynia,' Page 32



WE'RE EXPERTS AT DELIVERING ON COMPLEX REQUIREMENTS, SO YOU CAN FOCUS ON BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS.



We're excited to introduce the newest community Catamount is working on in Colorado - **Westminster Promenade**. This new 4-story, 300-unit multifamily project is located near US 36 and Church Ranch Boulevard and includes a precast parking garage and townhomes.

For 20 years, customers nationwide have put their trust in Catamount. We understand the specialized requirements of multifamily construction and our team members have the expertise and dedication to meet your project's unique needs. We do what it takes to make your project a success - that's the Catamount way.

CONTACT CATAMOUNT FOR YOUR NEXT MULTIFAMILY PROJECT.

CATAMOUNTINC.COM

**PARTNERSHIPS.
PERFORMANCE.
RESULTS.**

Lowen

Continued from Page 6

Other products, such as moderate rehab programs, have emerged recently in response to this investor shift to value add from Class A. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have acquisition/rehab programs that allow for greater flexibility during renovation.

• **Green.** If you had to characterize the themes and trends across the multifamily space in a few sentences, what would you say?

• **Lowen.** We will continue to see the delivery of high-end Class A units through 2018-2019. I do think we've hit the inflection point for high end so we will likely start to see this tapering

off and lots of projects with construction debt in need of permanent debt. This will provide additional opportunity for nonbank lenders, who are not highly regulated and have greater autonomy, to handle these deals and get the construction debt off the bankbooks and into permanent financing. Lenders with experience in

prestabilized and recently stabilized financing will continue to play a large role as this unfolds.

In my opinion, more critical and creative thinking, as well as a scrappier attitude, will be the names of the game in the multifamily market here in Colorado and across the country going forward. ▲

Dynia

Continued from Page 26

repeating modules of 18-foot sections are accessed through private gardens, creating a sense of a townhouse configuration. Innovation should extend to unit design to create flexibility. The

unit designs are flexible, including spaces such as crib rooms that can alternatively be used as home offices. Only one hallway, the length of the four-story building, exists to access the one-bedroom apartments and

top-floor units.

In most parts of the country, we are in the middle of a housing boom that hopefully will be used as an opportunity to repair community fabric and mend social ills. In concert with our

development partners, we are committed to designing quality housing projects. We strive to enhance communities and promote social connectivity, while at the same time delivering timeless and innovative work. ▲

Dyk

Continued from Page 28

views to the media (and who will be given the task), and how often your company will update social media streams and websites.

• Assign staff to reach out to public aid organizations, such as the Red Cross to assist residents affected by

the emergency.

• **Expect surprises.** Even the best-laid disaster recovery plans aren't foolproof. There inevitably will be unaccounted for scenarios or circumstances. When this happens, take note and use the information to update your organization's plans so that everyone will be better prepared

for the next curve ball thrown your way.

The more planning you do up front, the more competently you and your team will perform in the heat of the moment. If you don't already have a disaster recovery plan in place, don't let the idea of putting one together overwhelm you. Quali-

fied disaster response partners with a proven history of working with multifamily properties should be aware of the nuances of the industry and can help you build a good basis for your plan. After all, knowing what to do and who to call after a disaster can make all of the difference in a speedy recovery. ▲

Conover

Continued from Page 30

base of the bikes and ellipticals. Everything in the fitness amenity should have a storage place to keep accessories and clutter organized. Broken equipment should be repaired as soon as possible, so make sure equipment is purchased from a company that provides superior after-sale sup-

port. This is just as important, if not more important, as the initial equipment purchase.

Quarterly or semiannual preventative maintenance will not only extend the life of the equipment investment, but also prevent more equipment downtime and resident dissatisfaction. Careful daily inspection by the property manager can ensure that

cardio TVs are working correctly and that all units are functioning properly. This includes plugging headphones into each cardio unit and trying each machine to ensure smooth movement.

When machines are broken, let the residents know by placing an out-of-order sign with the problem and anticipated repair date. To avoid dis-

satisfaction and costly repairs, and to remain competitive, cardio units ideally should be replaced about every three to five years depending on use and service history.

Consider a survey system or online comment box for residents to provide feedback on the fitness center and equipment. Act on these requests in a timely fashion and be responsive. ▲



Apartment Appraisers & Consultants

- Appraisals and Market Studies
- Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, FHA/HUD
- Colorado Front Range Cities
- Since 1992

www.apartmentappraisers.com



Apartment Insights

- Full details of 1,300 properties, surveyed quarterly since 2004
- New construction pipeline, rents, vacancy, owners, managers
- Denver, Colorado Springs, and Fort Collins/Greeley

www.apartmentinsights.com