

## IN THE REGION/Westchester

## Single-Family, Meet Mixed-Use

By ELSA BRENNER

**F**OR decades in this riverfront village, with its single-family houses lining steep streets, planning board officials discouraged apartments above stores in its small business district, classifying such living arrangements as nonconforming.

These days Hastings officials are rethinking that approach, influenced by the strength of a nationwide trend toward mixed-use development — in which people live close to retail outlets and mass transit, instead of spread out away from the town center and dependent on automobiles.

But change has not come quickly to this traditional village, said Patricia C. Speranza, chairwoman of the planning board. More than six years after the Manhattan-based Urban Green Builders first submitted a proposal for Riverton Lofts, a condominium complex in the center of the business district, the company is finally nearing completion of the \$17.5 million project, along with a more moderately priced rental complex.

Riverton, a four-story building with a center courtyard, has 25 loft-style condos ranging in price from \$330,000, for a studio, to \$1.6 million for a three-bedroom with striking views of the Hudson. And however hesitant some longtime residents have been, buyers themselves seem drawn to the more modern design of the condos and the concept of living downtown, said Eric Anderson, Urban Green Builders' principal. About 60 percent of the units are either in contract or have closed already.

The "affordable" rental project nearby has cost \$4.5 million. The three-building complex on Warburton Avenue in the downtown includes 14 below-market-rate units ranging from \$700 a month, for one bedroom, to \$1,300 for three.

Both projects have geothermal heating and cooling, energy-saving windows and appliances, and floors made of bamboo, a renewable product. Each unit is designed to take advantage of natu-



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ral light. Also, conveniently, the village downtown has a railroad stop on Metro North's Hudson Line; the commute to Grand Central Terminal takes about 35 minutes.

"Urban Green wants people to embrace the concept of sustainability and cuddle up to public transportation," said Mr. Anderson. He cited location as one factor that made Hastings the perfect place along the Metro North line for the two projects. Another is geophysical, he said: Hastings is sited on a vein of marble especially useful when drilling for the environmentally friendly geothermal pumps.

Ms. Speranza recalled that the planning board was in the throes of revamping its policies when Urban Green Developers first offered up its plans to build on two old gas station sites in the village. "The concept of mixed use was not provided for in our zoning," she said, "but we recognized the need to have more people living in the downtown to support our stores." The market-rate project, especially, represents a new direction for the village, she added, and as a result the approval process was long and drawn out.

In a village whose housing

**SIDE BY SIDE**

Two developments nearing completion in Hastings-on-Hudson — a condominium complex, left, and a rental, below — make use of environmentally friendly construction and don't require as much reliance on car travel.

criteria, the town of Greenburgh, which incorporates certain sections of Hastings, has been allocated four of the below-market-rate units for its residents. (Greenburgh originally acquired the long-vacant gas station site through foreclosure proceedings and sold it to the Hastings-on-Hudson Affordable Housing Development Fund Company for less than the back taxes owed on the property, plus the four units.)

The net gain for the village is 10 new moderately priced rental residences in the downtown that will go to firefighters, ambulance volunteers, municipal workers and school employees. "That will enable residents who might not otherwise be able to afford to live in Hastings to stay here," said Sue Smith, chairman of the local affordable housing committee.

The rental complex has one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, but the greatest interest is coming from young singles in search of affordable one-bedrooms. "Some of these young people have grown up in town," Ms. Smith said, "and they are exactly the kind of people we want to keep here."

To finance the rental project, the developer secured tax-exempt bonds issued by the state, \$700,000 in subsidies from Westchester County, federal housing credits and a letter of credit from the nonprofit Community Preservation Corporation.

Three of the apartments are designated for those with incomes not exceeding 50 percent of the area's median income, which for a family of four is \$50,800. The other 11 are for those earning 60 percent or below, which would be \$60,960 for a family of four, Ms. Smith said.

Now that the village has finally taken its first step to encourage mixed-use development and apartment living in the downtown, it is eager to do more, said Ms. Speranza of the planning board. "We're looking to further refine the zoning codes and move to the next project," she said.

It must also build another 86 affordable units in order to meet its county-assigned allocation, Ms. Smith said.

stock is predominantly colonials, cottages and wood-frame Victorians, and whose business district constitutes a row of undistinguished storefronts, the contemporary-style Riverton Lofts, designed by Stephen Tilly, a Dobbs Ferry architect, stands apart architecturally as well.

Using concrete-plank-on-steel construction, and limestone, terracotta brick and zinc on the facade, Mr. Tilly said, he and his colleague Ray Wobbe sought to create a building reflective of its residents' lifestyles. "That kind of contemporary green construction shouldn't be faked behind a facade that looks like traditional town houses," Mr. Tilly said.

Because Urban Green Builders is also constructing the rental complex, known as 422 Warburton, the village allowed Mr. Anderson to include in it the three below-market-rate units that Hastings would have required him to build in Riverton Lofts. That has enabled his company to realize a better profit on the market rate project. The rental project, Mr. Anderson said, "has been maybe break-even at best, from a financial point of view."

As part of the county's overall effort to meet affordable-housing