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# BUSINESS

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Metro Nova Communities

An architectural rendering of Tapestri Square shows vertical, narrow homes that are key to infill development and fulfilling the desire for higher-density housing in the capital region.



Sacramento Bee



Metro Nova Communities

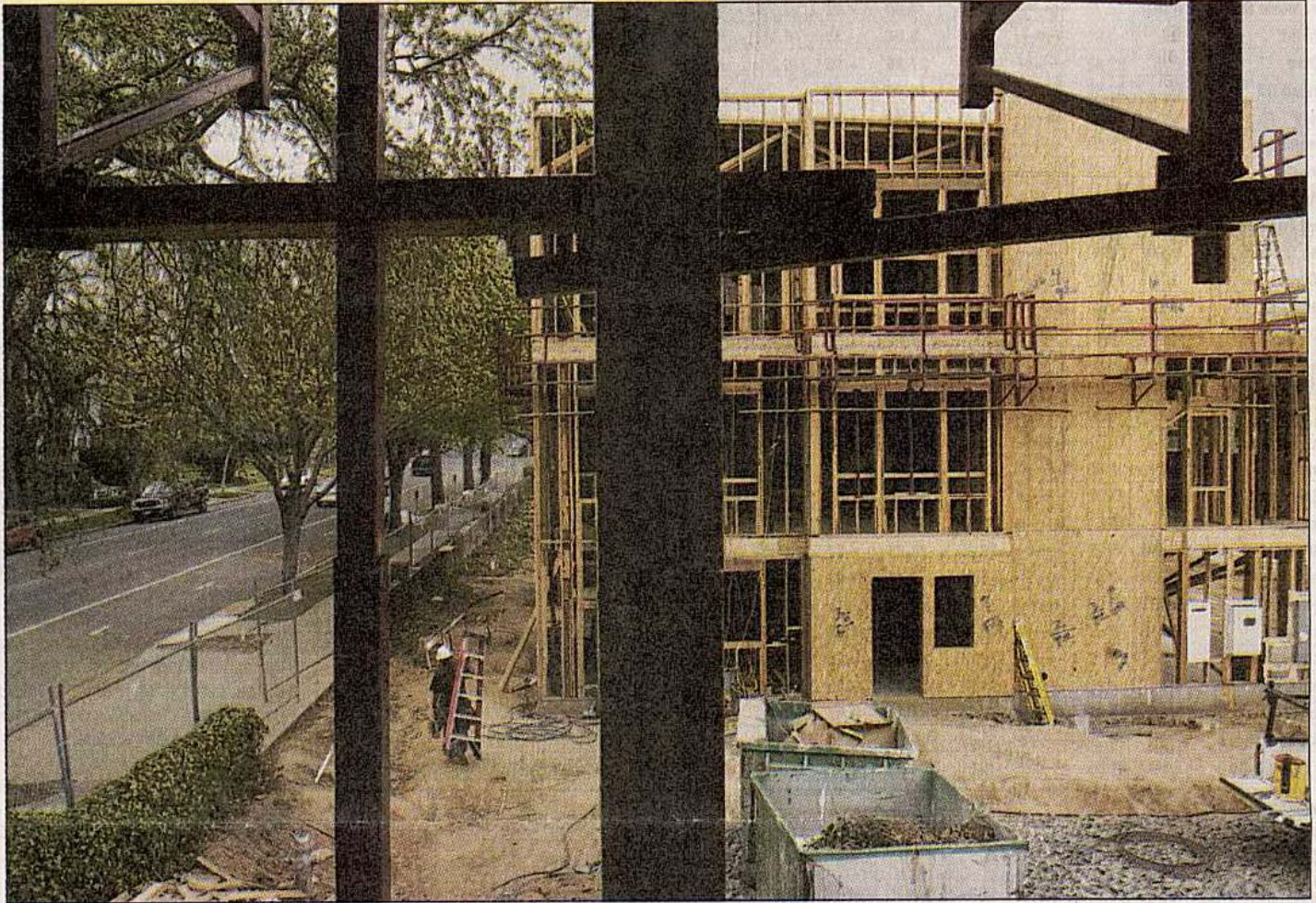
The tightly packed homes and front stoops of Tapestri Square are designed to enhance street life. But unlike the brownstones that inspired them, the homes do not share a common wall.

**“***We were looking for something with urban cachet and it evolved very quickly into the brownstone concept. ... It's a modern adaptation of a traditional style.***”**

**Kevin Noell**

partner in Metro Nova Communities

# The brownstones are coming



Sacramento Bee/Anne Chadwick Williams

Fifty-eight town houses are being built on 3 acres at 21st and U streets. Prices for the three-story, brownstone-style homes are projected from the mid-\$400,000s to the \$800,000s. Neighborhood amenities include a new Safeway and several restaurants.

## East Coast icon offers urban chic on compact lots

By Jim Wasserman  
BEE STAFF WRITER

**S**acramento home builders are tapping that venerable icon of East Coast architecture – the brownstone – to stir sales for nearly 100 new three-story town houses coming to midtown.

They don't look like much now as construction begins. But as the new homes begin to sprout on vacant land in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, builders say they'll evoke a classic brown-

stone ambience with their sturdy stone exteriors, second-story kitchens and living rooms and third-floor bedrooms.

The vertical, narrow homes are a key in the push for higher density housing in the region – with up to 43 units per acre compared to the five or 10 per acre common in the area's suburbs – and new examples of how in-fill projects are being used to turn the concept into reality.

"We were looking for something with urban cachet and it evolved very quickly

into the brownstone concept," said Kevin Noell, partner in Metro Nova Communities.

Noell, a San Diego builder, and his development partners Tony Giannoni and Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis plan 58 brownstone-style homes on 3 acres at 21st and U streets in a project dubbed Tapestri Square. Three models are under construction.

None of the new Sacramento homes  
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# Brownstone: Several projects planned

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will be exact replicas of the brownstones that populate the streets in eastern cities like New York and, increasingly, some Western cities such as Portland, Ore. Neither do they share common walls, a standard feature of the homes that originated as multistory European row houses.

But they do mimic the narrow widths common to homes built in urban areas: The buildings at Tapestri Square range from 16½ feet wide to 24 feet wide.

Tapestri Square is being built in an area with increasing shopping amenities. A Safeway grocery store and numerous restaurants are just blocks away; the Capitol is about a 15-minute walk from the project.

John Packowski, marketing principal of PHA Architects, said the idea for the buildings' look evolved as he walked past brownstones on the Upper West Side of New York City and later in Chicago.

"It's a modern adaptation of a traditional style," Noell said. "The verticality, the relatively narrow unit, is actually part of the ambience."

Most of the homes include the traditional walk-up to the main second-floor living area and the sitting stoops that give residents of brownstones a sense of neighborhood life.

Prices at Tapestri Square will range from the mid-\$400,000s to the \$800,000s for three-story homes ranging from 1,200 square feet to 2,600 square feet. The plan is to snag people downsizing from bigger single-family homes after their children are grown.

"That was the idea, to appeal to a somewhat older buyer who typically has an older, bigger home and furniture they don't want to part with. It can travel down with them," said Packowski, the architect.

About a mile away behind Trinity Cathedral at 27th and N streets, Sacramento-based Loftworks also is clearing ground to begin 32 three-story residences called Sutter Brownstones. The plan is to attract employees of nearby Sutter Hospital and others who "want to live more closely to the amenities the city



Sacramento Bee/Anne Chadwick Williams

**Models are under construction at Tapestri Square. Developers hope an update of the traditional brownstone appeals to empty nesters looking for a more urban lifestyle without the pain of extreme downsizing.**

is beginning to offer," said Mark Friedman, a Loftworks partner with Michael Heller.

Friedman hired the architectural firm LPA Sacramento Inc. and a Portland architect to blend older brownstone features and a more contemporary look for the town houses.

Tentative prices for the town houses, which range from 1,150 square feet to 1,700 square feet, are \$415,000 to \$650,000. The first units likely will be available at the end of November, Friedman said.

Both partnerships say the appeal of brownstone-style features will compete with proposed high-rise condo developments to the west in downtown Sacramento, including the Towers, Third Street and Capitol Mall, and Aura Condominiums at 601 Capitol Mall.

Analysts say the new housing is part of downtown Sacramento's long transition to an urban center with more for-sale homes, office buildings and entertainment offerings. Densities that range from about 20 per acre at Tapestri to 43 homes per acre at Sutter Brownstones also win praise – and predictions of quick sales.

"The thing we're seeing is that 30 to 40 percent of the population seem to want what I refer to as walkable urbanism," said Christopher Leinberger, a

fellow with the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., and director of the University of Michigan's graduate real estate program.

Leinberger, who recently addressed the Downtown Sacramento Partnership about revitalizing the city's urban core, said there is always pent-up demand for such housing because too little has been built. That also makes it more expensive.

In Rancho Cordova, Atlanta-based Beazer Homes is giving the brownstone concept a slightly more suburban twist for its Capital Village development. The builder plans 248 brownstone-themed homes in a community of 800 houses. Some are three stories and others two stories, said Sacramento division President Brendan O'Neill.

He said the brownstone theme fits for the homes' vertical architectural features and tiny lots that place the homes three feet apart. That's to help comply with the region's push toward putting more of its newcomers onto less space, he said.

The models are nearly finished with grand opening scheduled in mid-April. Prices range from \$304,000 to \$382,000 for 1,365 square feet to 2,200 square feet.

As the brownstone theme is unveiled downtown and in Rancho Cordova, three-story

residential units of all kinds are springing up across the metro area – with plenty more to come, analysts say, as expensive land prices also push housing ever more vertical.

In West Sacramento, builders are marketing at least three new triple-story projects that bear some resemblance to those in midtown. Those include Sacramento-based Leonard Development's 25-home River's Side at Washington Square and Fairfield-based SBB Associates' 34-unit Harriet Lane town house development. Regis Homes of Sacramento also is building 104 three-story houses at its Lofts at Ironworks.

The three-story concept is spreading far beyond the Sacramento's urban core, as well. Chicago-based Kimball Hill Homes plans an unspecified number of three-story single-family houses at its 168-home Somesert infill project on Franklin Boulevard in south Sacramento.

"A lot of this is going back to the higher density to get better efficiency out of your land use," said Mike Paris, the builder's Sacramento division president. "We have to go vertical in order to do that."

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