

Townhomes going for the green

Project aims for certification that many commercial properties seek

By NANCY SARNOFF
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A Houston architect and real estate developer is building six townhomes to be “LEED certified,” a green building designation that until recently was associated more with commercial properties than homes.

“We think being LEED will be an attractive feature for the home buyers,” said Camilo Parra of Parra Design Group.

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and is the benchmark for ecofriendly construction.

Properties are certified through the U.S. Green Building Council by accruing points for energy-saving and other green building systems and materials.

Parra said his project is expected to qualify because of its inner-city location near public transportation, concrete pavers that absorb water, native plants used in the landscaping, air-conditioning systems that consume less electricity and allow for fresh air intake, and the use of nontoxic paint.

He said owners could save up to 20 percent on electricity consumption.

The green construction is adding about \$10,000 per unit to the building costs.

That includes fees to the council and inspectors.

The three-bedroom, 1,820-square-foot units are priced at just under \$300,000.

Over the past three years, Parra has built about 100 units in this area and is planning to add as many more.

The project, called Upper West End, is east of Shepherd, between Interstate 10 and Washington Avenue.

Most of the people who will live in the development are young professionals and first-time buyers who want to be close to downtown.

While the market slowed last fall, it’s picking back up, Parra said.

“There’s demand for smaller affordable houses near the city,” he said.



Six ecofriendly townhomes being built near downtown are for sale at just under \$300,000.

PARRA DESIGN GROUP