

BUILDER SNAPSHOT

Winthrop strikes gold with green

Builder touts healthy living, resources in multifamily buildings

By Leslie Mann
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Chicago is a city of big developers with big projects. You can sign on the dotted line for a colossal condo, but you may never meet the people who built the place. Tucked in between the big guys, though, are the smaller niche developers like Ibrahim Shihadeh and Bob Horner.

In 1999, the duo formed Winthrop Properties, which is named for the Chicago street address of their first project. One by one, Shihadeh and Horner have completed multifamily buildings in Chicago and Evanston. By the time a buyer becomes a Winthrop homeowner, he is on a first-name basis with the partners and their four-legged office greeter, Cocoa.

Based in Evanston, Winthrop works hand-in-hand with FitzGerald Associates Architects in Chicago. The developer's target is the eco-aware buyer who recognizes the acronym LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). "We are committed to the [U.S. Green Building Council] LEED certification process," says Horner. "We believe that within five or 10 years, a building that is not LEED silver or better will be functionally obsolete."

The green-building trend is partly consumer-driven and partly regulatory, adds Horner. "The buyers look for this type of housing. With the municipalities, we are at a junction," he says. "Some have no energy ordinances, while others, like Evanston, are ahead of the game."

The developer's current project, the 99-unit Winthrop Club, was built to meet the gold LEED certification standard. The concrete-and-glass building curves to give its buyers views of Lake Michigan or the Chicago skyline. Behind the glitz, are building systems that minimize water and energy use and keep indoor air clean.

Inside, the Winthrop Club condos have all the frills its buyers expect, such as 42-inch cabinets, hardwood flooring, soaking tubs

and balconies. Base prices for remaining units start at \$299,000.

Buyers don't hear their neighbors in Winthrop buildings, thanks to sound-insulated common walls and 8-inch concrete floors, say the partners.

Other recent Winthrop Properties projects include Printers Corner in Chicago's South Loop, Crain Street Commons in Evanston, and, in the West Loop, Madison Bishop Townhomes and One One One Morgan. The Winthrop portfolio also includes the conversion of a former print shop into Printers Row Lofts in Chicago's Printers Row and of Evanston's former Marshall Field's building into a mixed-use development.

Depending on the location, most of Winthrop Properties' clients are young professionals or empty-nesters. Their common thread is their desire for maintenance-free living and proximity to public transportation, restaurants and shopping. "The empty-nesters want to downsize — some," says Horner. "If they had a 5,000-square-foot, single-family house, they don't want a condo that's smaller than 2,500 square feet."

Young professionals want smaller digs at lower prices, says Horner, but expect their kitchens and bathrooms to be just as well-appointed as those in larger units.

Plenty of parking is a perk at their buildings, says Horner. Winthrop Club offers one parking space per bedroom, plus spaces that are available on short- or long-term leases.

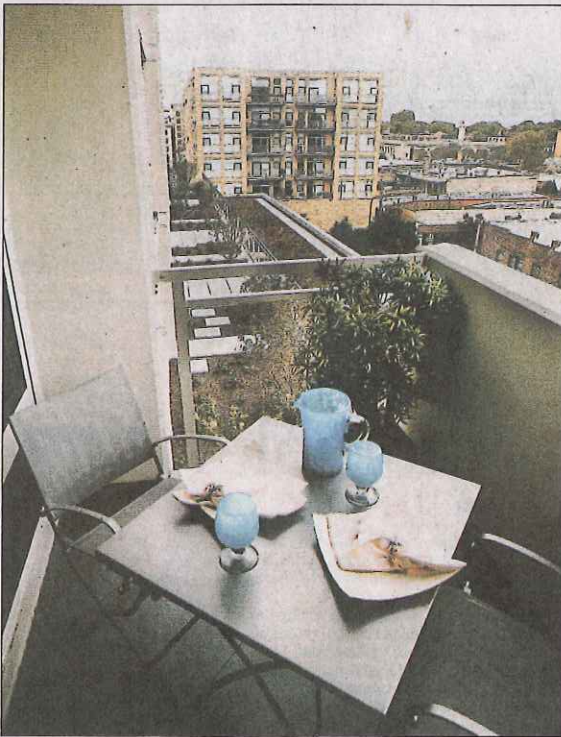
Horner and Shihadeh have working-class roots, though their roots are 6,500 miles apart. Horner grew up in an Oak Park two-flat, where, he recalls, "I thought it would be great to get any job that allowed me to wear a suit and tie to work." He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in business, then worked his way up the ladder at a volume homebuilding company.

Meanwhile, Shihadeh grew up in rural Israel, the oldest of eight. After immigrating in 1967, he collected a degree in structural engineering. He parlayed his engineering expertise into a remodeling business, which he still operates in addition to Winthrop.

Weekends, the partners play as hard as they work. Shihadeh rides his Belgian horse and is learning



Ibrahim Shihadeh, left, and Bob Horner formed Winthrop Properties in 1999. Most of their projects have been in Evanston and Chicago.



One of the views from the 99-unit Winthrop Club in Evanston, which meets gold LEED certification. SHAUN SARTIN/PHOTOS FOR THE TRIBUNE

to fly airplanes. Horner skis in Utah or fishes for lake trout at his Door County, Wis., place. But, retirement is not in the cards. "Retire? In my next life," jokes Shihadeh.

Next up for Winthrop is a 350-unit apartment building in the West Loop. It will include green-building features such as a geothermal system and solar hot-

water heating. "It will be as close to off-the-grid as we can get it," says Shihadeh.

Horner and Shihadeh nix the notion that renters are not as willing to invest in eco-friendly buildings as buyers are. Says Shihadeh: "We think this building will prove that today's young people, especially, are not just willing, but looking for this."

STREET VIEWS ON LOCATION IN PLAINFIELD
BY LESLIE MANN

Do you ever take off work to do home improvement projects?

Susan Reddick of Oswego, student



No, I'm working on my bachelor's degree so I don't have time right now for home improvement projects. My house is new, though, so it doesn't need much work yet.

Art Curtis of Plainfield, marketing newsletter publisher



No, I do some weekend projects. But my cousin is a carpenter, so usually I just make the lists of things he can do!

Oscar Gaytan of Bolingbrook, toy designer



Yes, I have taken time to do remodeling projects — plumbing, electrical, whatever needs to be done.

Sharna Riemer of Plainfield, homemaker



No, I'm home with the kids. I do the painting and landscaping while they're in school.

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