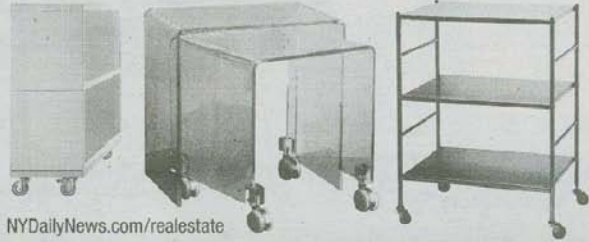


your HOME

Friday, May 8, 2009

DAILY NEWS

Cart wheels for the home



NYDailyNews.com/realestate



The Green GIANT

Can NYC become an eco village?

Baldev Duggal in his future 'Greenhouse'

GARY HE

*** Readers ask Barbara:** Rent a furnished Brooklyn apartment for \$1,000?



Sustainability and sales

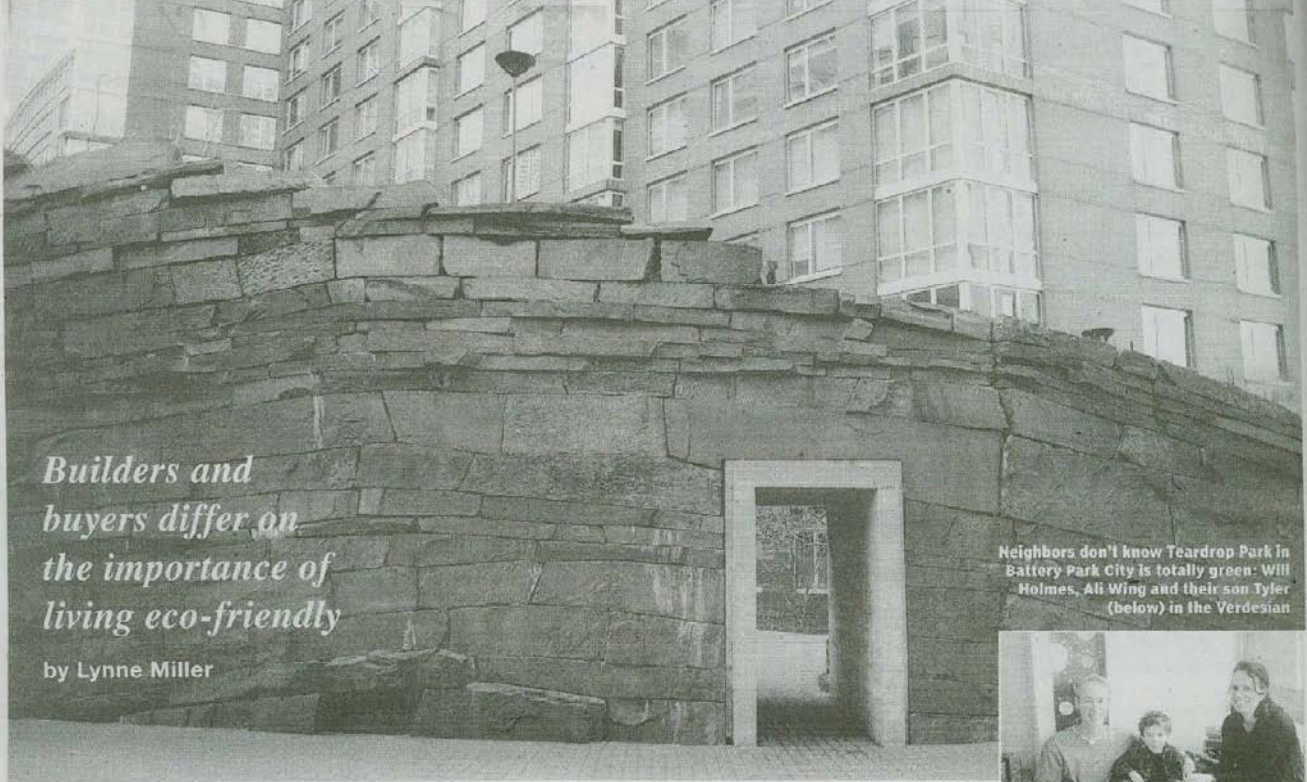


*** The Closer:** Clodagh benefits children in Kenya



DANIEL ALBRY

YOUR HOME GREEN LIVING



Builders and buyers differ on the importance of living eco-friendly

by Lynne Miller

Neighbors don't know Teardrop Park in Battery Park City is totally green: Will Holmes, Ali Wing and their son Tyler (below) in the Verdesian



PHOTOS BY BRYAN SMITH

Shades of Green

Does building green drive apartment sales? That's what we've been wondering since 2003, when the Solaire rental tower in Battery Park City made history by becoming the first green high-rise in North America. Despite dozens of green dwellings sprouting up in the metropolitan area, the answer might be "not yet." They do, however, drive building decisions.

"What gets lost sometimes is that green construction means delivering a significantly higher-quality building," says Russell Albanese, president of the Albanese Organization, who built the Solaire and recently came to market with the Visionaire, the greenest residence in the

city. "All the features are almost too much to tell the buyer at first. But as they live in the building, they become informed."

Russell Onger, executive director of the U.S. Green Building Council's New York chapter, firmly believes it makes economic sense to build well-insulated, energy-efficient buildings. In 10 years, he predicts every builder will be constructing green homes, and he's shocked people don't know more now.

"Buildings that don't do green will stand out in a negative way," he says, noting that tenants in green buildings save on utilities.

Fortunately for developers, green building products are more accessible. They don't have

to look hard to find reliable materials like insulation made from blue jeans, says Larry Bijou, developer of New Jersey's first LEED-certified silver condominium, the Garden Street Lofts. He thinks green methods must become standard.

"Who wouldn't want to live in a better environment?" he says. "It would be better if everyone was building green. Buyers will catch on."

Thus far, most haven't. While most journalists interview buyers handed to them by publicity reps for building owners, this reporter hit the streets to find people living in green buildings. What did we find? Location and new construction are more important factors driving purchase than environmental highlights.

That shouldn't surprise anyone. As a trend, sustainable living solutions date back to the early 1960s, when Rachel Carson's best seller "Silent Spring" enlightened readers about the planetary crisis. As a real estate marketing tool, however, green themes are just eight years old, and construction companies still don't know how green roofs reuse rainwater.

The question real estate marketers, builders and agents have to ask is do New Yorkers consciously hunt for green homes.

For Harlem resident Janelle Russell, the newness of the building, not the greenness, drew her to the Kalahari, a 249-unit condominium on 116th St. Virgin appliances, pristine carpeting and a great layout were selling points for Russell, 38, a fashion industry executive who this year launched the Brasini line of Brazilian style bikinis. She made an offer on a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment based on a floor plan, and bought it for \$380,000, below the market rate, through a lottery for first-time homebuyers.

Russell isn't fussy about indoor air quality, but she's got nothing against the fresh air that pours into the apartment through ceiling vents. To maintain the environment, she rarely opens the large, well-insulated windows. Ironically, in a building with state-of-the-art green technology, her favorite feature is the master bedroom window, which bathes the room in light.

"On sunny days it's just beautiful," she says. "I keep fresh flowers in that window."

From the window of her home office, Denise Shull sees barges gliding along the East River and traffic crawling along E. 79th St. The view sold her and partner Bill Long on the \$3,700-a-month, two-bedroom rental at the Octagon, a 500-unit

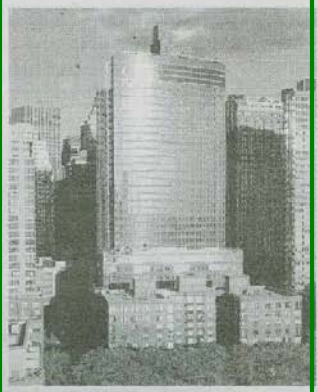
nydailynews.com

DAILY NEWS

Friday, May 8, 2009



Janelle Russell in her newly purchased apartment at the Kalahari in Harlem



Visionaire, New York's greenest home



JEANNE HOONKAN

Bill Long and Denise Shull like the quiet at the Octagon on Roosevelt Island



Some contractors are just now learning about green roofs like the Solaire's

LINDA ROSNER/DAILY NEWS

LEED-certified building on Roosevelt Island. Apportioned with rooftop solar panels, high-efficiency boilers and other eco-friendly tools, the Octagon was created from a historic rotunda building that housed a mental hospital.

Shull and Long, though, like the tranquility. The sleepy island feels like a shelter in contrast to Greenwich, Conn., which has more traffic than Roosevelt Island, where cars are scant.

Shull's allergies, though, have gotten much better. She isn't sure if that's because of the well-ventilated air she breathes at home or the holistic practitioner she swears by. She and Long both enjoy the courtyard, where residents flop on Adirondack chairs and enjoy the views or a dip in the pool.

"The best thing about the building is the environment," says Long, 53, referring to the views and courtyard, not solar panels.

For some New Yorkers, living in a green building is a priority. Ali Wing, 42, and Will Holmes, 39, want to minimize their son Tyler's exposure to pollution and chemicals, so it was important they find an eco-friendly building.

They rented a three-bedroom, two-bath unit at the Verdesian, a 26-story tower also from the Albanese Organization that rates platinum, the top rung on the LEED ladder. In Wing and Holmes' home, you won't find a shred of carpeting.

"We're really about air and breathing," says Ali, the CEO of Giggle, a chain of children's stores. Carpeting can cause problems for people with allergies, and carpet sealants can contain high levels of toxic chemicals and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) that give off fumes. The light-blond wood floors are made from sustainable harvested wood.

In the bedrooms, bright organic cotton spreads made with nontoxic dyes cover the beds. Peel-off circle stickers in many hues decorate the walls in 6-year-old Tyler's room, which is filled with toys, stuffed animals and a HEPA air filter. Wing uses

it to keep fresh air circulating, though she realizes it's probably unnecessary in a home that's pumped full of fresh, filtered air.

"You could say it's overkill," Wing says. "I take it one extra step in his room."

Jennifer and Peter Gy needed more space and found a green apartment by accident. Wanting to be close to Wall Street, they looked up and down Battery Park's North End Ave. before signing a lease for a two-bedroom at the Tribeca Green.

It has the high-end features you'd expect in a \$5,400-a-month rental, like slick white European-style kitchen cabinets and granite counters. Less flashy are the filtered air system, insulated windows and energy-efficient appliances.

The couple pay less for electricity than they did at their old 1960s-era apartment in midtown. They also feel better. Jennifer says her sinus infections and bouts of bronchitis, which were a chronic problem, have disappeared. Peter says his throat is less scratchy. He and Jennifer most appreciate being able to see the sky and having Teardrop Park nearby.

"It's like an oasis," says Jennifer, 40, an art dealer specializing in photography. "Even if you offered me an apartment on Park Ave., I'd want to know, is it eco-friendly?"

Albanese, a leader in environmentally correct construction, pays close attention to why buyers and renters look toward green buildings.

"Very few people even knew what green was in 2003 when we built the Solaire," he says, noting now that most Visionaire buyers aren't aware that the building's elevators recapture their own brake energy, a first in New York City building. "Recently, we've seen a tremendous transformation in buyers and contractors who understand it is the future of quality building."

'The best thing about the building is the environment'

— with additional reporting by Jason Sheftel