

City Lights, Suburban Sites

Renters and homeowners who want bright-lights-big-city lifestyles are finding them, far from downtown.

BY LISA SKOLNIK



Focus Development targets all generations with its 42-condo and 12-single-family home project in Lake Forest, Kelmscott Park.

City dwellers crow about their carefree high-rise homes loaded with amenities, vibrant neighborhoods full of exciting offerings and super-short commutes, thinking they have the best of all worlds.

These days, though, for city living at its best, many renters and buyers are heading to the suburbs—and for good reason, since these once-sleepy burghs are becoming more urban as they gain walkable downtowns that sport retail, restaurants and transit offerings, according to real estate think tank Urban Land Institute. Not surprisingly, luxury apartment buildings are finally following the crowd. In the Chicago metropolitan area, cases in point are the Emerson in Oak Park, AMLI Deerfield and Kelmscott Park in Lake Forest.

But there's also another force at play in this new world order, notes AMLI Residential SVP Jennifer Wolf. These suburban buildings must cater to a newly emerging market where millennials and the baby boomers who spawned them are seeking the same kind of housing. "Not everyone wants to live downtown," Wolf says. "Young professionals who work in the suburbs don't always want long reverse commutes, while empty nesters and seniors want to be near their children and grandchildren." The upshot? Developers are getting strategic and creative to design suburban buildings that please both generations.

Nowhere is this more evident than at LMC's Emerson (1135 Westgate St., Oak Park, 708.998.4820, theemerson.com). With a novel design spreading 270 apartments over a red brick five-story midrise and glassy 20-story high-rise that are connected by an enclosed walkway—plus prime location at the edge of



From top: LMC beckons luxury renters to downtown Oak Park with its smartly designed 270-apartment development, The Emerson; AMLI Deerfield offers suburban sophistication with primo amenities, eco-friendly features and smart interiors.

Oak Park's downtown—the just-completed building is a crowd-pleaser.

"We designed two very distinct structures to offer different lifestyle options," says LMC Division President Doug Bober. It's also strategically sited just steps from the train station, a theater and shopping and eating options that offer something for everyone—be it mass or class. "Oak Park is as good as it gets for city living in the suburbs," Bober says. Besides a full complement of amenities that range from a state-of-the-art fitness center and training studio to a business center with private office spaces, the building will offer fitness classes and community programming.

At AMLI Deerfield (1525 Lake Cook Road, 844.810.3619, amli.com), design details such as extra-large closets, cabinets, mudrooms, washers and dryers are appealing to its millennial and boomer residents. So are its great amenities, which have a significant focus on sustainability and keeping living spaces as healthy as possible.

These are important considerations to both generations that live here, notes Wolf. Along with LEED Silver certification, AMLI Deerfield's units are packed with eco-friendly features. The building boasts electric-car charging stations, a bike repair shop, a community recycling program, a proprietary Breatheasy program that offers smoke-free environments inside and outside and an organic garden that supplies residents with edible organics during the growing season.

With the property now a year old and almost fully occupied, "we've found that not only do millennial and baby boomers like many of the same things, they enjoy living together," says Wolf.

"It's an interesting balance because they all take advantage of the amenities, but at different times and in different ways."

In Lake Forest, Focus Development is taking aim at all generations at the ambitious Kelmscott Park (111 Franklin Place E., 847.234.1800, kelmscottpark.com), where 42 condominiums at the north end of downtown will be complemented by 12 single-family homes. Now under construction and being marketed by @properties, the project is "the first large-scale condominium development to be built in Lake Forest in nearly a decade," points out Focus Development President Tim Anderson.

To please young professionals and empty nesters alike, the condos will range from two- to four-bedrooms and 1,500 to 2,565 square feet, but all will have a balcony or terrace, include underground parking and feature separate storage spaces. More significantly, with its promise of maintenance-free living, proximity to Lake Forest's vibrant downtown and the Metra Union Pacific North Line, the Kelmscott Park condos are a harbinger of things to come.

Just ask David Wolf, president of ON Collaborative, Coldwell Banker's new national development sales and marketing division. "We're working on high-rise condo projects in two very exclusive Chicago suburbs where nothing like this has been done before. They're prime examples of this trend and will break ground this spring," he says. For now, he can't name which suburbs, but rest assured: The properties will be luxe and loaded with amenities that will appeal to millennials and baby boomers alike. ■

