



COURTESY OF WINTHROP PROPERTIES

Winthrop Properties has opened new models at Printers Corner, a contemporary high rise in Chicago's Printers Row.

Winthrop, Marquette avoid cookie-cutter condo designs

When designing the floor plan of a large home or condominium, the layout possibilities are numerous. But how many ways are there to lay out an 800-square-foot condominium?

According to two developers, the answer is plenty, if the design is creative and efficient.

Winthrop Properties in Chicago and Marquette Cos. in the suburbs say the successful designs of their smaller condominiums is a combination of knowing what the buyer will want and adding some surprises to set the space apart.

Both developers offer floor plans that measure roughly 800 square feet and compare their designs to show why they are among the best-selling in their market.

With a 17-story high rise now complete and ready for immediate move-in, Winthrop Properties says it has signed nearly a buyer a week since the start of the year, attributing demand to the smart floor plans.

"Many of the new construction condominiums are quite similar in their layout and tend to be 'vanilla boxes,'" said Bob Horner, co-principal of Winthrop Properties. "That's not the case at Printers Corner, where buyers can tell a difference the moment they walk in the door."

Unlike many condominiums, where one foot through the door and prospective buyers find themselves right in the middle of the living area, every Printers Corner floor plan includes an entry foyer. "Buyers are pleasantly surprised to find in even our 769-square-foot, one-bedroom home, there is formal foyer space. It makes all the difference.

People can take a pause when entering the home, and hang up their coat or set their bag down," Horner said.

Another floor plan feature that makes a difference is the built-in tech center. "Just about everyone has a home computer, but in a smaller condominium, finding a place for it, along with all the wires, printer, etc., can be a challenge. So we took a few square feet and built in a computer desk with overhead cabinets for storage. And all your hook ups, including a phone line and power source, are right there," Winthrop Properties co-principal Ibrahim Shihadeh said.

Horner and Shihadeh also said that buyers should be conscious of cubic square feet. "Nothing opens up a space more than having high ceilings," Horner said. "At Printers Corner, our units have 10-foot ceilings, complemented by floor-to-ceiling corner windows. The sunlight and airy feeling make the homes feel so much bigger."

All homes include 1 1/4-inch granite kitchen countertops, imported Italian kitchen cabinetry, G.E. stainless steel appliances, hardwood flooring, crown molding, a washer and dryer, a tech center, Grohe bath faucets, marble baths and a Whirlpool tub.

At The Ponds of Naperville, many first-time buyers are happily surprised to learn that owning a home in a city named one of the "Best Places to Live" by Money magazine can be affordable and roomy.

"Naperville is consistently ranked one of the best places to live in the country, but living here usually comes with a high price tag," said Art Bettuzzi, general sales manager

for Ryan Hill Realty, the community's exclusive sales and marketing agent.

"At The Ponds, buyers can own a home in Naperville from just the \$130s. And they're getting a lot for that price, including abundant storage space and an efficient layout."

One floor plan showcasing this smart use of space is the 800-square-foot, one-bedroom, one-bath Naper. With a coat closet off the front entry, a pantry in the kitchen, a full wall closet in the bedroom and a storage closet on the balcony, this plan provides desirable space for first-time buyers who are most likely moving straight from apartments, Bettuzzi said.

In addition, many buyers appreciate the convenient and open layout of the Naper's main living areas, making it ideal for residents who enjoy entertaining. "Rather than an open kitchen, living and dining area, the Naper offers a division of space with a dining room adjacent to the kitchen and a separate living room," Bettuzzi said. "This layout lets buyers keep their party preparation behind the scenes while guests mingle in the main room."

Located at 1333 Modaff Road in Naperville, The Ponds of Naperville is being converted from apartments to condominiums by Marquette Cos. Measuring 800 to 1,100 square feet, homes come with one to two bedrooms, one to two baths, balconies or patios, and one parking space.

For information on Printers Corner, call (312) 880-1800 or visit www.printerscorner.com; and for the Ponds of Naperville, call (630) 848-0488 or visit www.pondsofnaperville.com.