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Homes

# New Construction

Single-Family, Townhomes, Condominiums, Lofts



Loft living



Mixed-Use Developments

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# The Loft Life

## New Downtown Developments Invite You To Rediscover Urban Living

BY KELLY BURKART

Imagine a life with no daily commute, easy access to all of downtown's amenities and the joy of owning a new home in the middle of a thriving city. Homebuyers can have all of this and more with loft living, one of the most popular trends in home building in the Twin Cities.

According to Wren Aigaki-Lander from the Lander Group, the urban housing boom in the Twin Cities is definitely hitting its stride. "As the suburbs get farther out," explains Aigaki-Lander, "people want to return to the city and find a sense of community." They want amenity-filled, pedestrian-friendly, in-town housing and more often than not, they're finding those things by living in lofts.



*Photos courtesy of Lander Group; From left to right, West Side Flats, 9th Street Lofts in downtown St. Paul and Printer's Row in St. Paul.*



## *Just What Is A Loft?*

The traditional definition of a loft is a converted or renovated warehouse space with an open floor plan. But many developers are building lofts as part of new construction projects, as well. Tim Baylor of Riverview Homes in Minneapolis says lofts include everything from townhomes to condos to renovated spaces, but they all have these things in common: open floor plans, ceilings that are at least 10 feet high, lots of windows and lots of natural light.

Most lofts, particularly if they are converted warehouse spaces, feature an industrial look, but there are several developments that offer lofts with more traditional design elements such as hardwood floors or carpeting. "New construction often allows for greater design flexibility," explains Aigaki-Lander. "You don't have to work around architectural elements already in the building, which can impose constraints on design and ultimately on livability." New lofts often offer modern touches like stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, ceramic tile in the kitchen and bathrooms and all of the other modern conveniences found in new homes.

## *Pick Your Location*

The Lander Group has developments in both Minneapolis and St. Paul, including the Midtown Lofts, a 72-townhome development located on the greenway between Bryant and Colfax. "This is among the first new residential development on the area encompassing the greenway in decades," says Aigaki-Lander. It has a beautiful contemporary exterior and a courtyard, and it's close to Uptown and the Lyn-Lake area, two Minneapolis hotspots. It's also within walking distance of the Minneapolis chain of lakes.

The 9th Street Lofts by Lander Group feature 49 loft-style condominiums and are located in a renovated 1909 warehouse building in downtown St. Paul. In addition to updating the building with new plumbing, mechanical systems and a tuckpointed exterior, Lander Group created a rooftop deck for all of the loft residents to enjoy. "Just because you live in the city doesn't mean you can't enjoy the outdoors," shares Aigaki-Lander.

Also in St. Paul, Lander Group is building Printer's Row, with 84 loft-style urban homes. This new construction development will offer lofts with 10-foot ceilings and either a traditional or modern, industrial design. Printer's Row also includes eight Habitat for Humanity units, a first for loft developments in the United States.

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*Photos courtesy of Lander Group; From top to bottom, Printer's Row in St. Paul, Midtown Lofts in Minneapolis and Riverview Homes in Minneapolis*

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Riverview Homes is building in the "Above the Falls" area of Minneapolis, located just north of Broadway Avenue about five minutes away from downtown Minneapolis. The eight-acre, five-phase development includes luxury townhomes, condos and senior housing, all with a loft design. Baylor says living in the Riverview development appeals to young professionals, couples whose children have left home and couples who don't have any children. "We've built a new community with housing choices for almost everyone in the market," he explains.

### **City Living = Great Views**

Since Riverview Homes is right on the river and the development is next to Skyline Park, its lofts offer beautiful surroundings in addition to a convenient location. "We have the most spectacular views in the city, of both the Mississippi River and downtown," says Baylor. Additionally, homeowners in this development can enjoy the nearby park woodlands area, picnicking, biking, walking and watching water ski shows performed by the Minneapolis Water Ski Team at this spot on the river. "You get all the excitement and sizzle of downtown combined with all the tranquility and serenity of suburban living," Baylor explains.

### **Convenient Urban Living**

Homeowners choose lofts for the convenience of urban living, and it's important to have transportation options, shopping, services, recreation/health clubs, restaurants and adequate parking nearby, shares Aigaki-Lander. "The biggest issues with downtown and warehouse district developments are the challenges in bringing amenities to the homeowners," says Aigaki-Lander.

Lander Group has put a salon and a tax preparation office near the 9th Street Lofts and is exploring other retail and service providers for the space. In a similar move, Riverview Homes is adding 8,000 square feet of retail space to its development next year, including a restaurant, convenience store and coffee shop.

In addition to all the benefits of downtown living, lofts are a great investment with high resale value, says Aigaki-Lander. As more people look for a new community and the rebirth of our downtown areas continues, lofts will be increasingly popular in the next several years. Is a loft in your future? Now may be the perfect time to find out.

*Kelly Burkart is a Twin Cities-based freelance writer.*

