

For at least the past 30 years, gays and lesbians have gone to great lengths to prove that the strongest community isn't necessarily the most traditional one. Wellington Management—a 21-year-old property development firm based in St. Paul—took the hint when it created an assortment of gorgeous condominiums in the hottest neighborhoods in town.

"In your single-family home, you might know six or seven of your neighbors," Tanya Bell, Director of Development and Acquisitions at Wellington, says. "But in this arrangement, your community is a lot more people. It's fun to talk to the folks who live there, because they like the diversity: in age, careers, backgrounds, and people."



EMERALD | GARDENS

URBAN TOWNHOMES & LOFT CONDOMINIUMS

Emerald Gardens (at the corner of 820 Emerald Street, St. Paul), for example, presents the perfect hybrid: traditional, sophisticated architecture around a landscaped interior courtyard, combined with an outgoing party atmosphere (think summer barbeques and condo crawls). Its neighborly environment has been winning folks back from suburbia at an astonishing pace—but then again, as the property borders both Prospect Park and St. Anthony Park, it makes for an easy sell.

Bell notes, "The activity on our projects is pretty good—it's a fair amount of interest in that transition, and it's a very different world to think about living in that environment after living in a single-family home."

To help make that transition easier, Wellington farms out the actual management of the property to companies specializing in residential supervision.

"Managing a condominium is extraordinarily different than managing retail. We felt it was really important that our homeowners had someone who specialized in managing that type of property," Bell explains.

The homeowners themselves also have played a big part in shaping Wellington's development projects. For instance, when Emerald Gardens was partially completed, Wellington Management approached the homeowners to discuss adding particular amenities that could result in increased association dues.

As Bell recalls, "We figured out the cost to manage it and furnish it, and they all came back and said that, no, we don't need it. We live on University Avenue. We can get to where we need to go."

Though many competing condominium projects add amenity after amenity, Wellington Management—which co-developed Emerald Gardens with urban housing specialists Hunt Associates—has found that by starting with a great location, and mixing residential with convenient retail, like onsite coffee shops and grocery stores, residents don't need anything more.

Bell points out, "Association dues can go up a lot with the amenities. You have to pay for insurance, upkeep, and the physical space. It can add up a lot!" Emerald Gardens represents a success story of another sort, as it was part of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup program. On the site previously were a lumber warehouse, a lead-storage-battery manufacturing facility, and an auto repair and wrecking facility. After approximately 5,600 tons of contaminated soil was disposed of, the gorgeous 108-unit condominium complex is a welcome change.

According to Bell, it's part of what makes her job so enjoyable: "I've spent 25 years working on University Avenue, so it's a lot of fun to watch its transition."



THE METRO LOFTS

Wellington Management built another highly attractive property in the Prospect Park/St. Anthony Park area at 2650 University Avenue, St. Paul, with more of a contemporary, minimalist aesthetic. The Metro Lofts, which just opened—featuring open floor plans, high ceilings, and loft-style finishes—is tending to attract the younger set. “I don’t know this one’s personality yet—they do get a personality,” Bell laughs.

Though the building is new, its 6,000-square-foot retail area on the first floor already houses a Dunn Bros Coffee™ shop.

The soon-to-be-completed neighbor at 2700 University Avenue, St. Paul, offers a similar aesthetic, so buyers of units there will be able to tour The Metro Lofts to get a sense of what their condominium would look like when done. Though the 2700 building is not yet complete, buyers have a distinct advantage in being able to pick out all the finishing touches precisely to suit their taste.



SHADOW falls

Similarly, Shadow Falls—a two-building development currently under construction at 2320 Marshall and 205 Otis, St. Paul, one block from the Mississippi River—allows for complete customization at this stage.

Both buildings have, in Bell’s words, a “natural, built-in amenity—skyline views and killer views of the river—which puts you on 20 miles of bike trail.”

In Shadow Falls, Wellington found creative ways to save its future tenants money in construction.

As Bell comments, “It’s lucky, because it’s called a mid-rise building. It’s living in that high-rise feel, but it’s just short enough for us to put individual furnaces in, so our association dues are 10 to 13 cents a foot lower.”

In Minneapolis, Wellington Management is taking advantage of the Chicago/Lake renaissance with Corridor Flats, just west of Hiawatha Avenue. Conveniently on the light rail line, the 36-unit building (still under construction) eventually will encompass a grocery store on its main level, residential units on its upper three floors, and heated underground parking.

All these options, combined with the flurry of condominiums on the market right now, can make for an exhausting shopping experience.

Fortunately, all Wellington Management properties are listed together at <www.urban-blueprint.com>, a veritable one-stop condo shop. The sales office is located at 2388 University Avenue, St. Paul. Call (651) 772-1000. Hours are Tuesday-Friday, 10:30 AM-5 PM, and weekends, Noon-5 PM.

urban living CORRIDOR flats

