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Simsbury by Landmarks Development
is exceptional in every way.

Chris Nelson & Ron Janeczko

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On June 20th, sixty builders, suppliers and realtors attended a fascinating Sales & Marketing Council meeting hosted by Chris Nelson and Ron Janeczko at their outstanding new mixed use development, The Mill at Hop Brook in Simsbury.

One of the many interesting and market savvy aspects of this mixed use project is the apartment complex known as Mill Commons. As SMC chairman, Joanne Carroll, related in her opening remarks, so few single family builders venture into rental, yet the rental share of the housing market is projected to hit 41 percent by 2020, with an average increase of over 1 million rental units per year in the U.S.

Carroll went on to say that three reputable studies — by NAR, Robert Charles Lesser & Co. (RCLCo), and Arthur

Nelson — all found a nearly identical imbalance in US housing supply and demand.

- ▶ Attached housing and small-lot housing are undersupplied.
- ▶ Household composition is changing and that is impacting demand.

Housing demographics point to success for The Mill at Hopbrook

- ▶ Less than one quarter of U.S. households today fit the married with 2.5 children model, and the fastest growing segment has been single-person households.

▶ According to Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies, married couples without children will grow at an even faster rate than single-person households.

▶ Millennials or Gen Y, ages 20-34, are putting off buying a home and renting instead. According to NAHB, the average age of first-time home buyers is now around 34—

at least six years older than it was in 1980.

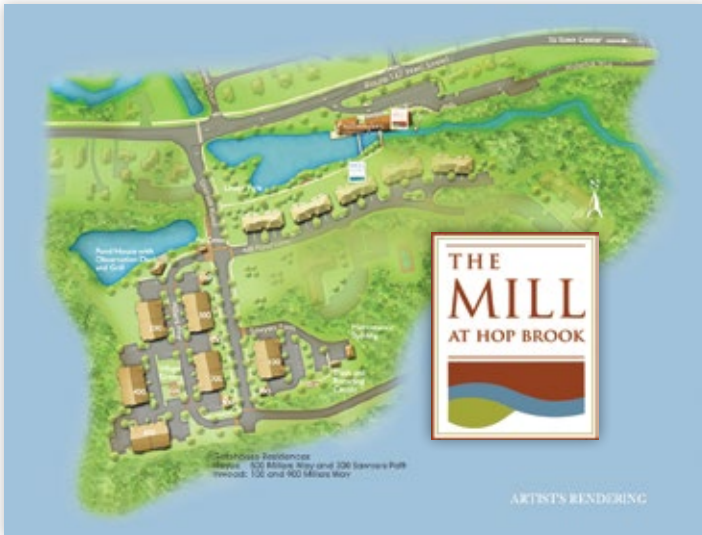
▶ Three-quarters of retiring boomers said they want to live in mixed age and mixed use communities that are walkable and close to town centers.

Ron Janeczko and Chris Nelson have hit the nail on the head with The Mill at Hop Brook by offering attached townhomes and apartments in an amenity rich, mixed use community within an easy

stroll to the center of Simsbury.

For twenty years, their company, Landworks Development, has been acquiring land in the Farmington Valley and developing award winning housing communities with Nelson Construction as the builder. Ron Janeczko is the creative force in land acquisition and zoning approvals and Chris Nelson, the expert in high performance construction.

Landworks Development acquired the 330 year old Mill at Hop Brook and surrounding property from Ensign-Bickford Realty, a subsidiary of the Ensign Bickford Company, which was founded in Simsbury in 1836. Ron Janeczko planned and negotiated the complicated approval process for this innovative \$30 million multi-phase mixed use development. Otherwise known as Grist Mill Commons, the



project is designed around a site plan that incorporates 20 luxury town homes, 88 upscale apartments, a restaurant and office space. It is the first development to be approved under the town's Planned Area Development (PAD) zoning regulation, which allows for mixed use and other "innovative" developments in non-residential zones. Both the PAD and recently adopted Simsbury Center Zone codes permit high-density residential, along with restaurants, retail, and offices.

According to Simsbury Director of Planning and Development, Hiram Peck, the Mill at Hop Brook site plan approach of mixing townhomes, rentals residences and commercial space was a solid fit for the new PAD zoning.

Over the last eighteen months, Ron and Chris renovated the mill, which had been reassembled and rebuilt in the 1980's by Ensign Bickford. The knowledge and experience of old post and beam construction that Chris's father, Carroll Nelson, brought to the rehab was invaluable. HVAC, electrical and lighting systems were updated and a handicapped accessible elevator was installed.

"Our energy consultant,

Peter Harding of Home Energy Technologies, made gold out of straw, by bringing this centuries old mill to code and making it energy-efficient," said Chris Nelson

Jim Meltzer of Connecticut Lighting provided layers of light using low voltage track, recessed and decorative lighting, with Lutron control to program lighting settings. The mill waterfall was illuminated using a hidden metal halide flood light.

Ron Janeczko enlisted celebrity chef, Tyler Anderson to turn the mill into a destination restaurant, and Anderson opened five star rated Mill-

wright's Restaurant & Tavern last August. The main floor of Millwright's accommodates fine dining, with wood tables and bar crafted by Sanson Inc. Dalene's Flooring supplied specialty urethane flooring in the state-of-the-art commercial kitchen. Picture windows in the main dining room overlook an enchanting dam and waterfall, while the lower level houses a cozy tavern with fireplace and exposed brownstone walls. The third floor loft, where the old mill machinery is on view, provides space for private parties and is outfitted with a Sanson bar and a GE Café' French door refrigerator provided by

CAFD.

Interior design for the restaurant, as well as Pond House community building and Mill Commons model was provided by Kirsten Floyd. Hartford Magazine recently named Millwright's "Best New Restaurant in CT" and "Best Ambiance/Décor". The historic wood and stone mill building with chestnut beams, also houses a satellite office of Landworks Realty, as well as the leasing office for the Mill Commons apartments.

Mill Commons comes to life

Five hundred yards of brownstone was harvested during site development, and expert project mason, Santo Veneziano, found a Brookfield company to cut the stone into veneer for the apartment buildings.

"It was the same cost as imitation stone and allowed us to use natural stone which is native to the Farmington Valley," said Chris.

To create an interesting, dynamic streetscape for Mill Commons, Farmington architect, Jack Kemper, added four 22' X 22' three story, gatehouse buildings, which mimic the style of the 265 Simsbury single family homes built by

(continued)



The business community ought to be excited that we're moving good development forward.

- Hiram Peck, Simsbury P&D Director



• Party loft



• Tavern

Ensign Bickford for its factory workers years ago. These single unit apartments, with vinyl clapboard and brownstone facades, range from 1,246-1,781 sf, and each is designed with a private garage and patio. Six additional three story elevator buildings are designed with key fob lobby access, and each accommodates fourteen one and two bedroom units, ranging from a 927 sf. 1BR 1B plus den, to a 1,410 sf 2 BR 2B plus den with direct access to garages from first floor units and raised ceiling on third floor units. All apartments have balconies or patios and the Pond House community building is nearing completion.



Chris Nelson explained how he approached the apartment construction differently than he did for single family. “We used Jack Kemper for the design, and a multi-family focused architect, who was

Let’s make a great streetscape with several gatehouse buildings.

- Jack Kemper AIA, Kemper Associates

familiar with ADA codes, for the working drawings,” said Chris. Nelson streamlined the building process by using a turnkey construction package from national supplier, 84 Lumber, who is familiar with multi-family construction and could provide a volume price on labor and materials for framing, roofing and windows. “This allowed us to avoid potential issues with new framing laws, and value engineer construction,” said Chris. Chris used local suppliers wherever he could, including Sanford & Hawley for interior trim and doors and Cyclone Home Systems for community building security and video, as well as unit shelving, mirrors and bath accessories. Connecti-

cut Lighting supplied LED light fixtures for all common hallway and site lighting and energy saving track, under cabinet and decorative lighting for the interior of the units. CAFD supplied GE stainless steel appliances, including a top freezer refrigerator, electric range, over the range microwave, dishwasher and a front loading washer & dryer. Dalene Flooring provided carpeting, bathroom tile and hardwood flooring. The third floor model apartment lives bigger than its size with a granite island kitchen open to the living room/dining area with ten foot ceiling and outdoor balcony. Two bedrooms, each with its own bath are located on either side of the living room. A gas

tankless boiler, which hangs on the wall in a balcony utility closet, handles hot water and heat for the unit. Mill Commons is certified Energy Star 3.0, which according to CL&P new construction program administrator, Enoch Lenge, is a “huge deal” for apartments. “There are not many builders willing to risk the added expense of Energy Star 3.0, so it’s a testament to Chris Nelson that he was willing to stick to his model of energy-efficiency, even with a rental product,” said Enoch Lenge.

Committing to a high performance Energy Star building comes with its rewards.

For Chris Nelson and Ron Janeczko, building to Energy Star 3.0 maintains their reputation as a high quality builder and developer; provides their tenants with the incentive of a lower projected utility bill; and gives them rebates that offset up to 70 percent of the added construction cost. According to Chris, the Energy Star certification provided him with a \$1,300 per unit rebate. Peter Harding modeled the building details, framing,

(continued)



• A Gatehouse unit





insulation, HVAC, windows, appliances and lighting. To qualify, the buildings had to be rated 15 percent above code. "These apartment buildings came in at 40-50 percent better than code with a HERS rating of 50," said Lenge.

Marketing & managing Mill Commons

In transitioning from for sale housing to rental, Chris and Ron were astute in choosing

Trio Properties, a company with 30 years of experience in apartment marketing, property management and lease up. Ron Janeczko and Jim Bechtel, Bechtel Advertising, created the branding and development story for Mill Commons, and Trio is handling lease up and property management. Trio Properties executive Vice-President, Jeff Feron, described the profile of Mill Commons tenants as singles, couples

with no children, empty nesters, move downs and 10-15% divorcees. So far, forty units are leased at \$1,600-2,700 per month, and the last two 14 unit buildings are under construction.

Mill Pond Crossing brings townhouse ownership into the mix

A meandering brick path leads from Millwright's restaurant to Mill Commons. Along the way, Sales & Marketing Council attendees passed the foundation for the first of five 4 unit townhouse buildings, appropriately named Mill Pond Crossing. Chris Nelson is using the Superior Wall Xi foundation system because of its green attributes, and ease of installation on a tight site. Superior Walls rep, Roy Schweitzer, explained the advantages the system offers as a permanent barrier against sidewall water penetration and the reduced energy loss and added com-

fort provided by 2 1/2" DOW extruded polystyrene insulation and 1" foam insulated concrete studs and beams.

Each townhouse will have a two-car garage and walkout lower level space with the option to be finished as a recreation room with full bath. The 1,800 to 2,100 square feet of living space in the townhouses becomes 2,200 to 2,700 square feet with a finished lower level.

The twenty 3 story townhouses at Mill Pond Crossing will bring home ownership to The Mill at Hopbrook, and offer residents the same enchanting woodland environment with pond, waterfall and that unique amenity - Millwright's restaurant for fine dining and its tavern for informal fare.

The old mill is humming with life again, and as in years past, residents are a short walk to Simsbury town center. The Mill at Hopbrook is an exceptional mixed use development with success written all over it! ■

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