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Living large in small spaces

BY REBECCA R. NEWSOME, MIRM

As the award-winning building company that has pioneered to set the standard in healthy, green home building in the Triangle as well as North Carolina at large, M Squared Builders and Designers is achieving new heights as the preferred builder at Rougemont's Elderberry Retirement Village, a rural co-housing "eco-village." Best described as a creative alternative to urban living, Elderberry will consist, at its completion, of 18 green and energy efficient homes at a maximum of 1,200 square feet each. The community is located 30 minutes north of Downtown Durham on a picturesque 10-acre property, offering space for farm animals, organic food and flower gardens, wooded trails, a central courtyard, and a Common House for cooking, eating, entertaining, crafting, and other special events. All of these amenities combine to provide residents the ability to live simply and sustainably, in a village where they can support each other as they grow older.

M Squared Builders and Designers President Michele Myers has been a part of Elderberry since the community's inception. "We liked Michele from the start," says Mary Bennett, one of the Elderberry developers. "We like the fact that her company is local and we like that she only builds certified green and healthy, energy efficient homes. Even more, we like that M Squared has adhered to these principles for many years – Long before it became a popular thing to do. When we asked around, from bankers to home owners, we found that Michele and M Squared have a stellar reputation. Having M Squared at Elderberry is a perfect fit."

M Squared is equally pleased to be part of the team at Elderberry. "It's exciting to see healthy, green, and energy ef-



Visit the homes at 92 and 94 Elderberry Lane, built by M Squared Builders and Designers, open today and next weekend during the Green Home Tour.

ficient housing become mainstream," says Michele. "As Mary said, we've been building this way since the late '90s; most often, however, in larger homes. We're delighted to fill this need in a smaller footprint."

Home owners at Elderberry are delighted as well. "I can't say enough good things about M Squared," says home owner Rosemarie Sawdon. "The entire M Squared team was extremely helpful in customizing the plan for my home. I'd been through the home building process in previous homes and I knew what I wanted in this home. Having worked for the environment for many years, I was impressed with Michele's knowledge in green building. She kept her word on everything she said she would do for me, at the price that was in the contract. Although I had downsized several times, I fretted a little about moving into a 1,200 square foot home. I'm happy to say that my home has a spacious feel and I don't feel cramped at all. If I were to do it again,

I would absolutely choose M Squared again."

Jeff Everson has similar sentiments. "My wife Anne and I are still getting settled into our home, as it was just completed in January. We love it! We're first-time home owners, so we needed a lot of hand holding throughout the building process. We had lots of questions, and everyone on the M Squared team gave us good advice. We now have a 1,000 square foot home that feels much bigger... They worked with us on tweaking a plan to make it right for us. We love the fact that our home is tight and solid; we don't feel air intrusion the way we did our previous apartment. Michele explained the building process to us, showing us why she takes certain steps and uses specific materials. Once we went through the design phase and pricing was quoted, no prices increased. We're very happy with our home"

An M Squared duplex of two homes in Elderberry is on this year's Green Home Tour, spon-

sored by Green Home Builders of the Triangle. One home is 707 square feet and the other is 1,200 square feet; both are under construction, making it easy for M Squared to show what makes these homes special as they are being built. "As a graphic designer, I had a very clear idea of what I wanted," says Joyce Hopkins, the client for which the 1,200 square foot tour home is being built. "I've been working with M Squared for well over a year to design my home and bring it to fruition. Although I own a townhome and a 100 year-old restored home, I've never been through the building process until now. M Squared has walked me through the process, assuring me that they want my house to be perfect for me. My experience has gone very well. I'm excited about how I want to live in this home and how M Squared is helping me get there."

Learn more about M Squared and Elderberry by visiting msquaredbuilders.com and elderberrycohousing.com.

Local market trend report

CONTRIBUTED REPORT

The Durham Regional Association of Realtors and The Triangle Multiple Listing Service (TMLS) reports the following information pertaining to the Durham housing market in March 2015. The data shown reflects information on properties located in Central, East, North and Southern Durham. The percentage changes are comparisons with the prior year unless otherwise noted.

New listings in the Durham area declined 9.8% by 589 homes for sale. Inventory levels fell 24.3 percent to 1,294. Closed sales increased 26.5% to 358.

Prices continued to gain traction. The Median Sales Price increased 10.7 percent to \$191,500. Days on Market increased by 13.8% to 66. Sellers were encouraged as Month's Supply of Inventory was down 27.1 percent to 3.8 months.

The Year to Date Housing Affordability Index in the Triangle was at 150, which is 2.6 percent lower than March 2014. This index measures housing affordability for the region. An index of 120 means the median household income was 120% of what is necessary to qualify for the median-priced home under prevailing interest rates. A higher number means greater affordability.

Jon Fletcher, president of the Durham Regional Association of Realtors states that "We are fortunate that, here in Durham, we have a hot market. In spite of February's weather, the low (62) "days on market" indicates that there are plenty of buyers looking for their new home." In today's real estate market, the combination of low interest rates for home buyers and a shortage of homes for sale, adds up to the four bold letters every seller wants to see: SOLD. If you have been considering listing your home for sale, the 2015 spring market is the time.

When you are ready, make sure you work with a Realtor, a member of the Durham Regional Association of Realtors, who can explain options that best fit your situation. Contact DRAR at 919-03-2117 for more information.

SOURCE: TRIANGLE MULTIPLE LISTING SERVICES

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