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Dwell Development LLC
The Builder Next Door

Dwell Development The Builder Next Door

By Marta Kilborn

In business since 2005, Dwell Development has quickly established a track record almost as exciting as the modern living spaces they design and build. Recognized as one of the preminent modern townhome builders in Seattle, Anthony Maschmedt, principal, has found a way to combine his background in design and real estate investment into a business that seems to effortlessly meet several demanding benchmarks at once. For starters, recent and future Dwell homes are committed to be built to the highest Built Green® rating of 5 stars. Energy efficiency, recycled materials, indoor air quality and drought tolerant landscaping all contribute to Dwell homes passing the rigorous screening and constant inspections of the Built Green independent 3rd party verification of process. Interestingly, Maschmedt, says he never set out to create Built Green homes, it was just a natural course of action. "I build that way anyway," he says. "I never went out to make a statement, 'look at us, we Build Green.' It was more like, 'we build a really cool, modern home. And, oh yeah, it's Built Green.'"



Striking modern design and spaciousness define every kitchen. High-end Kohler fixtures complement appliances with a modern look. Photo by Tucker English.

From Maschmedt's perspective, perhaps the most important thing is that most of Dwell's projects center around the new Light Rail transit lines and established business districts, allowing Dwell townhome owners to walk, ride or bike to almost anywhere they need to be. The desire to contribute to a community influences

the builder's work, and important aspects of his life seem to exist within a five mile radius, including his home, his children's schools, his business and much of his extended family. Many changes have taken place in Seattle since Dwell was founded, but the "which came first" question applies, as so many hip coffee shops, restaurants and stores seem to have miraculously appeared around where Dwell homes are built in Columbia City, Beacon Hill and the Central District.

Location, style and affordability add up to sales. Even in the terrible economic climate of the past two years, Dwell's properties stay on the market an average of 33 days or less. It may be that Dwell homes move beyond the idealism of green building and provide the kind of living spaces urban dwellers really want; cool, sexy, and modern homes designed to offer the kind of urban sanctuary expected of houses almost double the price. Utilizing the talents of Dwell architect Julian Weber, Maschmedt uses design as a tool to ensure sustainability and affordability go together. "Good design shouldn't cost more," Maschmedt says. "Especially if



Clean lines, custom tile work and high-end energy efficient fixtures appoint each bathroom in a Dwell home. Photo by Tucker English.

you incorporate thoughtful green design early in the process.”

As an example, a recently sold home located on North Beacon Hill has all the amenities one expects from a home designed with a timeless modern aesthetic. Cyprus wood floors are very hard and stable enough to accommodate the hydronic heating system. Pella designer series wood clad energy efficient windows boast an excellent warranty. Stylish glass mirrored appliances with matching cabinets and Kohler faucets, beautiful Ann Sacks tile work and a myriad of thoughtful design elements are found throughout. It also enjoys a remote controlled fireplace, two decks, three bathrooms and a master suite designed to sway buyers, all for under \$499,000. Again, it is the Dwell team’s understanding of design that allows him to include high-end materials throughout every project.

Roof top decks are a signature component of Dwell Development that serve two purposes. One is the wow factor of a fully finished outdoor space with the urban vantage point of a fourth floor view. These roofs also give Maschmedt another place to shrink his building’s carbon footprint. Many recent and all future homes built by Dwell Development include solar panels and meters either installed, or roughed in and pre-wired for eventual use by the new home owner. “Solar panels allow the home to return unused electricity to the power grid,” Maschmedt says. “Our homes are about 35 percent solar efficient, with the capability for almost 100 percent if the home owners decide they want to expand the system down the road” In addition, Dwell homeowners can expect a refund for as much as \$500 a year for the energy the buildings return to the power grid, he adds.

Affordability is yet another element important to Maschmedt and just one reason he’s eager to take advantage of today’s opportunities in purchasing properties. Even though he has no properties languishing on the market and has sold eight homes since the

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Natural light floods this open living area, showing off gorgeous Cyprus floors and a sleek kitchen featuring a glass-fronted refrigerator and dishwasher. Photo by Tucker English.



Modern living becomes the epitome of sustainable style in the hands of Dwell’s design team. Photo by Tucker English.



Open stairways are as much about style as they are energy efficiency, allowing conditioned air to circulate freely throughout the home. Photo by Tucker English.



Dwell avoids the cookie-cutter approach to building and buyers appreciate the economies of living on a scale that is urbane, affordable and unique. Photo by Tucker English.

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October financial crisis, Maschmedt has had trouble getting money to fund further projects. The Federal Government may be giving banks money to loan, but that doesn't translate into a successful builder getting any of the cash to fund projects and keep workers employed. "My new fulltime job has been to find a project the bank would finance," he says, adding: "They (banks) all say, 'We love you, you look great but we can't do it. Can't loan money for spec homes.' I am looking for funding and just hitting a brick wall."

Since October, Dwell Development's sales have been \$4.5 million and they have not ever had problems selling their properties. "If we could accomplish this in the worst real estate environment, in



These homes, which achieved a Built Green 5-Star Certification incorporate smart design and energy efficiency and were chosen as a recent case study for the Built Green home building program. Photo by Tucker English.

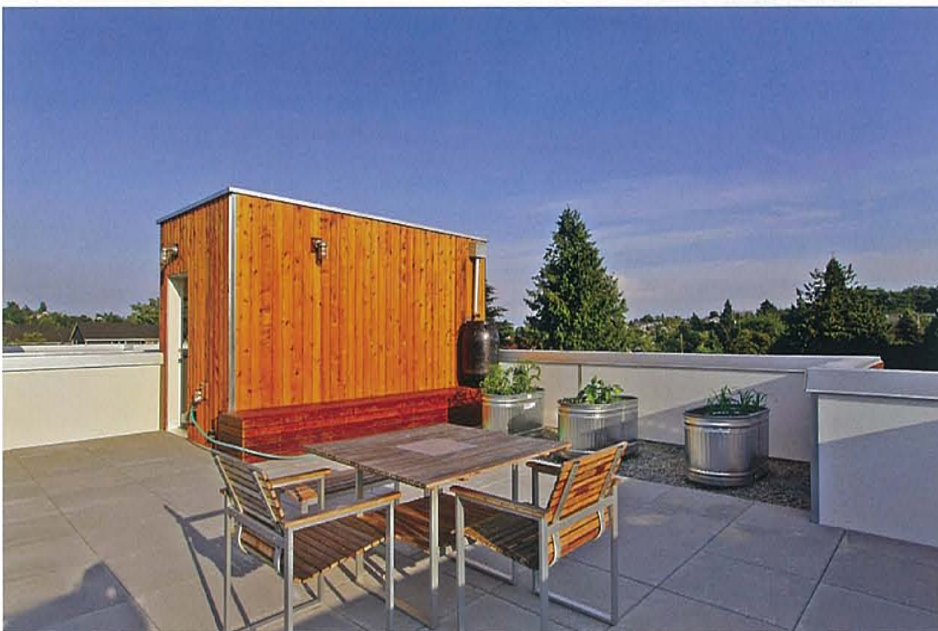
the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, then just think what Dwell could be doing once this economic recovery takes place," Maschmedt says. "I just need the banks to loan the money in order for me to keep this really cool business model going."

"I am not asking anyone to take a risk on me," he continues, citing a solid business plan. "I just want to build quality, modern, Built Green homes. The buyer wins, my contractors

and suppliers win and my people stay employed." Even with economic downturn and struggles -- he says there were an estimated 45 builders like him a year ago; now there are four to eight still active--Maschmedt remains optimistic. "I think there will be a housing shortage in a year or so," he says. "The future for Dwell is as bright as the availability of financing." Part of Dwell's business plan has always been to avoid overextending themselves. Maschmedt says in a perfect economic climate they would have two to three on-going projects, each with approximately three to five units, resulting in 8 to 12 new homes every year.

At the time of this article, Maschmedt has just pre-sold two of his four units under construction in Seattle's Judkins Park neighborhood. In addition, he is hopeful about a handshake deal with local lender Washington Federal and is in the process of buying some "cheap dirt" which, through the magic alchemy of design and sustainable materials, will become yet another ultra-cool abode treading lightly on mother earth.

For more information, please contact Anthony Maschmedt of Dwell Development at 206.683.7595 or visit their website at www.dwelldevelopment.net.



Dwell's roof-top decks provide additional outdoor living space, interesting views and a place to collect rainwater, grow gardens and take advantage of solar energy. Photo by Tucker English.

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