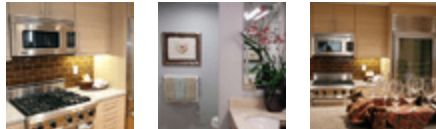


Mercer units moving fast

Luxury condominiums in Walnut Creek fill a city block

Valerie Fahey, Special to The Chronicle
Sunday, October 21, 2007



[More...](#)

Occupying a city block in downtown Walnut Creek, Mercer is a mixed-use development of high-end condominiums and more than 21,000 square feet of retail space. Home buyers have already snapped up more than half of the 181 condos in the \$100 million property.



Built by Prometheus Real Estate Group, the five floor plans range from an 893-square-foot, one-bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, to a 1,714- square-foot, three bedroom, 2 1/2 bath. Prices start at \$525,000 for a one bedroom and \$1.3 million for the three-bedroom homes. Eighteen of the 23 three-bedroom units were sold by late June.

Mercer's first retail occupant, the Counter, is a small but hip chain of build-your-own hamburger joints made famous as an Oprah Winfrey dining recommendation. Known for its more than 300,000 different burger combinations, the Counter will open in the next week or so and take up about a quarter of the Mercer's first-floor retail.

Mercer has been in the works for a while. Prometheus acquired the 2.5 acres of infill property across the street from the Leshner Center for the Performing Arts in July 2004. Construction began in the third quarter of 2005 and the first portion recently opened. A contemporary design of steel, concrete and glass, the building will have three interior courtyards, one with an outdoor kitchen and pool, and another with an outdoor fireplace.

The buzz for Walnut Creek's first-ever million-dollar condos was fueled last year by hard-hat tours and upscale receptions. The crowd at a recent sales office soiree included empty-nesters and hip young urbanites sipping Chardonnay and Cabernet and nibbling designer chocolates while listening to music from a French horn and harp combo. Flat-screen monitors on the walls showed virtual tours of the units.

The sales models are four blocks away, but here was a taste of the real thing - a mock kitchen and bath enabling looky-loos to test drawers on the European cabinetry, see the gleaming appliances, and run their hands across granite countertops. Wall displays show the 12 carpet options, from a tweedy Berber to creamy wool, and an additional dozen wood-flooring choices from a Nordic ash to black oak.

"There is a dearth of this type of housing in the East Bay," said Jon Moss, an executive with Prometheus. "There are a lot of people who want an urban lifestyle in the suburbs, and Mercer is walking distance to shops, restaurants, the Leshner Center and BART."

Mercer's concierge services will mirror that of a hotel. The staff will make reservations for dinner and entertainment, golf tee times, airport car service, pre-arranged dry cleaning pick-up/drop-off and the like.

The condominiums also have plenty of luxury amenities, including a fitness center, a pool and spa, and a clubhouse with kitchen and entertainment center. One-bedroom units come with one underground parking space, while two- and three-bedroom units have two. An extra space can be had for \$19,500. Guest parking, bicycle racks and garage storage are also available.

The two-bedroom, two-bath home, plus den comes in at a roomy 1,400 square feet. The living area, including the kitchen and dining area occupies about a third of the floor plan. The bathrooms and bedrooms fill the rest of the space. Prices for two bedrooms vary depending on location and view, but start at about \$750,000.

Sporting a very un-condo-like recessed entry, the front door opens to a clearly defined foyer designed to evoke that of single-family homes. Immediately to the left is the galley kitchen; directly ahead is a short hall replete with coat closet and to the right, the den. A large pass-through gives the chef a wide-angle view from the kitchen to the adjacent dining area and the living room. The openness of the combination dining and living room seems even more spacious with oversize, nearly floor-to-ceiling windows and a glass door leading to a balcony (most, but not all the homes have one) with enough room for a round table and four chairs. Behind the kitchen is the laundry room with room for a full-size washer and dryer.

The sleeping areas are well separated from the living quarters. Access to the second bedroom is through a hall with the bath to the right. Access to the master bedroom is to the left.

The kitchen has granite countertops and a 6-inch backsplash and comes with a Bosch dishwasher and GE Profile appliances. Appliance upgrades can include a Sub-Zero refrigerator and a Viking range. The master bedroom space occupies about a quarter of the floor plan, particularly attractive to buyers who are relinquishing a big single-family home for the low-maintenance Mercer. The walk-in closet separates the sleeping area from the master bathroom, which has marble countertops, double sinks, and an oval soaking tub plus a separate shower stall.

All units have central heating and air conditioning, high ceilings, fiber-optic Internet connections, and a prewired home network system.

Homeowner dues are between \$450 and \$500 per month, depending on the unit's size, and include hazard insurance, concierge services, common area maintenance, reserves, water and garbage. While its walkable neighborhood is a big attraction, commuters also have BART and Highway 24 and 680 entrance ramps a few blocks away.

City: Walnut Creek

Project: Mercer

Developer: Prometheus Real Estate Group

Architect: Don Sandy, design architect; KTG Y Group, project architect

Model: 2 bedrooms, 2 bath, plus den

Base Price: \$750,000

Square Footage: 1,400

Parking: one space per one-bedroom unit; two spaces per two- and three-bedroom units

Bedrooms: 2

Bathrooms: 2

Monthly fee: \$450-\$500

Sales office hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., daily

Address: 1655 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek

Sales Center: 1645 Mount Diablo Blvd., Walnut Creek

Phone: (925) 988-0400

Web: www.mercerwalnutcreek.com

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/10/21/RESIS8M12.DTL>

This article appeared on page L - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle