**PROJECT TYPE**

Master-planned community Lenox Village is one of the first projects to be built in the Nashville, Tennessee, region using the principles of new urbanism. At buildout, the 208-acre (84-hectare) development will comprise more than 1,400 homes—including many affordable and moderately priced units—and several mixed-use structures containing residential, retail, and office space. The city of Nashville worked with developers Regent Homes/Lenox Village I, LLC, and land planners Looney Ricks Kiss to create an urban design overlay—a zoning code similar to a planned unit development—that would allow for the narrow streets and building types called for by a new urbanist project. Development of the land also involved the restoration of a creek running through the project and the relocation of a rare species of crayfish.

**LOCATION**

Suburban

**SITE SIZE**

208 acres/84 hectares

**LAND USES**

Single-Family Detached Residential, Townhouses, Condominiums, Neighborhood Retail Center, Open Space, Workforce Housing

**KEYWORDS/SPECIAL FEATURES**

- Traditional Neighborhood Development
Pedestrian-Friendly Design

PROJECT WEB SITE

www.lenoxvillage.com

DEVELOPER

Regent Homes/Lenox Village I, LLC
Nashville, Tennessee
615-445-8888
www.regenthomestn.com

LAND PLANNER

Looney Ricks Kiss
Nashville, Tennessee
901-521-1440
www.irk.com

ARCHITECTS

Smith and Associates
Fairfax, Virginia
703-352-0116

Crossroads Architecture
Nashville, Tennessee
615-255-7796
www.crossroadsarchitecture.com

Kline, Sweeney and Associates
Nashville, Tennessee
615-255-1854
www.schooldesigns.com

Ben Bagget Architect
Cordova, Tennessee
901-484-2541
www.architect-bba.com

Inform, Smallwood and Nichols
Nashville, Tennessee
615-269-3130

Looney Ricks Kiss
Nashville, Tennessee
901-521-1440
www.irk.com
CIVIL ENGINEERS

Anderson Delk Epps and Associates
Nashville, Tennessee
615-331-0809

Batson & Associates
Covington, Kentucky
606-581-0062

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Developed by Regent Homes, Lenox Village is a 208-acre (84-hectare) master-planned community that, when complete, will include over 1,400 residential units and several mixed-use buildings containing residential, retail, and office space, in addition to open space. Built according to new urbanist principles, it comprises a variety of housing types on narrow lots, garages accessed by rear alleys, a strong pedestrian environment, strict design standards, and a mix of uses.

Throughout the project, different housing types and price ranges are located immediately adjacent to one another, rather than in separate sections of the site. Of greater significance, the housing types are not just different in form and appearance, but also have layouts and designs that are intended for various specific target markets. Through these varied housing types, Regent Homes sought to meet the demand of a number of niches in the housing market—rather than competing with several other developers to sell only single-family houses.

Sales at Lenox Village commenced in late 2002 with the opening of model homes. Due to a no-compete clause from a previous employer, David McGowan, president of Regent Homes, did not participate in the homebuilding business from 1999 to 2004. He and Rick Blackburn formed Regent Development in 1999 to begin planning and land development for Lenox Village, and for the first two years of marketing, Regent Development sold lots to six other builders, although officially a separate firm called Lenox Village I, LLC, was created specifically for Lenox Village.

In 2004, Regent Homes was formed to take over homebuilding for the project in addition to land development. Based in Nashville, it employs 29 people. McGowan and Blackburn are equity partners, with the former having a 75 percent share and the latter having 25 percent. They have developed several residential projects in the Nashville area. Their goals are to create beautiful and walkable traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs) and to be a leader in mixed-use and new urbanist development.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Lenox Village is located in the southeast portion of the city of Nashville, which is suburban in character. At the time the project was started, its site lay between an area of more prestigious neighborhoods to the south and west and an older, more blue-collar section of Nashville to the north and east. Development has pushed farther out in the intervening years, and Lenox Village is no longer as close to the edge of the metropolitan area.

The site’s location affected development in two ways. One, it increased the risk for the developer that high-end homes would sell poorly there. Second, and somewhat conversely, it also allowed the developer to market to a much broader cross section of incomes, as there was strong market potential for affordable, moderately priced, and middle- to slightly above middle-income housing.

The site lies along the east side of Nolensville Pike, a major arterial road connecting to the core of Nashville to the northwest. As it passes the site, the thoroughfare is a two-lane road with a center turn lane, but approximately
two miles (3.22 kilometers) north of the site it becomes a four- to six-lane arterial lined with a large variety of commercial uses. A traffic signal was added where Nolensville Pike meets Lenox Village Drive, the main entrance to the site. A second signal will be added along Nolensville Pike as part of a future phase of development.

Before forming Regent Homes, McGowan purchased the 208-acre (84-hectare) site from eight separate landowners and put it in a family trust. The site actually comprises two sections, each measuring approximately 100 acres (40.5 hectares). The main site, which includes Phase I and all of the mixed-use development, is located along Nolensville Pike. The other section, Phase II, is an interior site accessed through the first phase. The second phase also provides access to other existing subdivisions to the east and south.

The site is rolling, with a creek flowing through both phases. It was previously used for cattle grazing, and included a dam and seven-acre (2.8-hectare) retention pond for watering cattle. Single-family houses and agriculture buildings were torn down, but a church remains. The pond was drained and the dam removed for development, with the original streambed restored. A number of stands of trees were preserved on the site.

The pond contained a rare species, the Nashville crayfish, and the developer was required to relocate its habitat before removing the pond and dam. This involved working closely with state and national wildlife departments to re-create the original habitat suitable for recolonization and collect and move the species. The process was time consuming and closely monitored, but was considered a success as the crayfish continues to exist in the creek.

**APPROVALS, MARKET STUDIES, AND FINANCING**

A key aspect of the approvals process—which the developer had no control over—was the hiring in 2000 of Rick Bernhardt to be the executive director of the Metro Planning Department for Nashville and Davidson County. Bernhardt had a long history of planning new urbanist developments, and was willing to work with developers McGowan and Blackburn to create a framework in which Lenox Village could be approved.

The zoning code in the city of Nashville did not allow new urbanism by right in its residential section, and many aspects of the proposed Lenox Village were not permissible under existing zoning regulations. It did, however, allow planned unit developments (PUDs), and that was briefly considered for Lenox Village, although it was determined that even a PUD was too inflexible for the variety of uses proposed. Finally, the city planning staff suggested the use of an urban design overlay (UDO).

The UDO uses one or more underlying zoning codes, but is driven by a set of design guidelines, created by the developer and planner and approved by municipal staff, that determines what uses will be built and how they will look. The UDO covers a range of issues, including building styles, street widths, density, open space, and more, and is used in Nashville for large-scale plans, setting guidelines but allowing for some flexibility. It was written by the Nashville office of Looney Ricks Kiss (LRK), a planning and architecture firm with extensive experience in new urbanism.

There are two underlying zoning codes at Lenox Village. The portion of the site closest to Nolensville Pike is zoned for high-density mixed-use development, and the remainder of the site is dedicated to high-density residential. The underlying zoning regulates essentially just the number of units allowed and the range of uses planned, whereas the UDO determines the layout, appearance, and form of Lenox Village. The 1,400 units allowed apply to the 159 acres (64.3 hectares) zoned for high-density residential, which is a net density of close to nine units per acre (22 units per hectare). Additional residential units will be built in the mixed-use area of the site.

The approvals process was relatively straightforward and smooth. There was no major opposition by neighbors or other groups, and the working relationship between the developer and city staff enabled the process to move forward. From the submittal of the UDO to final city council approval took six months.

One minor impediment in the approvals process was the issue of road widths. There was a difference of opinion between the developer and planner and the public works department and fire department, which felt the roads
were too narrow and that—with on-street parking—they would not accommodate emergency vehicles. This is a very common occurrence in the development of new urbanist projects.

To alleviate their concern, a test was performed at the fire department training facility. LRK laid out cones representing street widths and parking lanes and had the city’s largest fire truck attempt to navigate and make turns. On the first test the fire truck ran over numerous cones, which were then moved back slightly and farther from the corner. By the third try, the fire truck succeeded in avoiding the cones, at which point all sides were comfortable with the street widths and on-street parking dimensions for Lenox Village.

McGowan’s previous development experience indicated a substantial opportunity for townhouses at Lenox Village, so he hired a third-party firm to do extensive market research. The market studies verified a market for townhomes and recommended a large number of specific target markets, especially for smaller units at lower price points.

Moreover, Regent Homes recognized that there was a major opportunity to build housing for these various target markets, especially since the vast majority of developers in the area were constructing standard single-family homes targeting nuclear families. The competition among these other homebuilders was tight, and with developers competing mainly on price, it made sense to pursue other market segments.

The market research identified demographic shifts, one of which is that the traditional nuclear family makes up a declining percentage of the housing market. To respond to this trend, a variety of housing styles was developed at Lenox Village, including single-family homes, townhouses, and condominiums, to suit various household types, including empty nesters, young couples, singles, and divorcees, in addition to families with children.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, the site is located in an area not necessarily regarded as prestigious. Nor did it have particularly desirable schools at the time. Both of these factors affect the ability to sell homes to families with children, which was more evidence telling the developer not to rely on single-family “move-up” houses for families as a core product.

Regent Development started Lenox Village by selling lots to six different builders. Convincing them to create home designs that incorporated new urbanist ideas, however, was a challenge. Even with the extensive market research indicating that a smaller, 1,200-square-foot (111.5-square-meter) townhouse, for example, would sell in the marketplace, one builder in particular still wanted to build its existing plan for a larger, 2,000-square-foot (185.8-square-meter) unit. It had to be convinced by the developer, and ultimately, the smaller townhomes sold very well.

Regent Development received financing from AmSouth Bank for the first portion of development, which included a release of the first 100 lots. A similar financing structure was used for the takedown of land for successive 100-lot increments. The value of the entire site was used as equity.

Several lenders passed on the opportunity to finance Lenox Village, thinking the mix of incomes and housing prices so close together would not work. They were proven wrong when all 35 lots available on the first weekend of sales in 2002 sold out. Lenox Village has sold well ever since.

**PLANNING AND DESIGN**

As mentioned previously, the design of Lenox Village is based on the principles of new urbanism. The developer, citing market research and previous development experience in the local housing market, felt that a new urbanist community, with an array of housing styles at affordable price points, would be successful on the site.

The developer studied other examples of new urbanist development, traveling frequently to other metropolitan areas across the South to better understand successful aspects of new urbanism. The developer joined Bernhardt,
council members, and other city staff from planning, public works, and other departments to learn about new urbanism firsthand.

The developer hired architect Allen Smith of Smith and Associates to create the original concept for Lenox Village, then hired LRK to handle detailed planning, including the UDO.

Regent Homes and LRK held a series of charrettes at the existing church on site. This was a chance for the developer, planners, and engineers to become more familiar with the site. The team would walk a portion of the site and return to the church to discuss ideas and come up with designs.

It was determined that any neighborhood retail and mixed-use development would be concentrated along Nolensville Pike, and the site would have major open space along the restored creek. Also, all condominium buildings are within two blocks of Nolensville Pike, but the remainder of the site features a combination of the various single-family detached and attached townhouse product offered. The developer points out that every housing design is within view of the sales office/visitor center, which faces the “village green.” All across the site, $170,000 townhouses are located immediately next to $300,000 single-family homes.

The UDO allows for up to 1,400 single-family residences, townhouses, and condominiums at Lenox Village. As of early 2007, Regent Homes had built and sold 900 units. Single-family houses are a variety of one- and two-story designs, with either alley-loaded or street-facing garages along the perimeter of the project. Townhouses stand two or three stories tall, with alley-loaded parking. The condominiums are three stories, with surface parking in off-street lots located behind the buildings. It is important to note that garages are not required for the townhouses. The developer felt it was important to leave it as an option so as to maintain a degree of affordability, as garages cost around $15,000.

One of the top-selling housing types at Lenox Village is a set of townhouses that face the creek. Although they are accessed by an alley, they do not have a streetfront because of topographic constraints.

Throughout the site, home designs do repeat, but are mitigated by a variety of exterior colors, articulated facades, and nuances such as location of porches or use of shutters. This was intended to give the development much more of a sense that it was built over a greater time period.

Materials such as brick and Hardie-Plank siding, rather than vinyl, were used. Around 50 percent of the homes have a front porch, although houses located on corners have a wraparound porch to increase the aesthetic appeal of the neighborhood.

The UDO specifies design standards for all buildings. Single-family residences, for example, have garages either facing alleys, which the developer and planner prefer, or facing the street if an alley can’t be built. All porches must be at least six feet (1.8 meters) deep in order to be usable, and any garages facing streets must be set back at least 15 feet (4.6 meters) from the front of the porch. Side yard setbacks must be at least five feet (1.5 meters), meaning homes can be quite close to one another and at relatively high density. Accessory dwelling units (or granny flats) are allowed on 25 percent of the single-family houses, although very few have actually been built.

Commercial design standards require that more than 80 percent of the building facade be built to the lot line. Other standards and requirements deal with signage, window sizes and location, etc., and are intended to make structures both usable and pedestrian friendly.

The developer has formed a design review committee to oversee compliance with all guidelines, which works with the city of Nashville planning department to ensure that all requirements are met.
The UDO also dictates street design. Every street in Lenox Village is a particular width based on presumed usage and traffic. Furthermore, all streets have sidewalks along both sides and most have parallel parking on both sides, with a couple of exceptions.

The site plan for Lenox Village incorporates a significant amount of open space. Most of it is passive in nature, and is focused along the restored creek. In addition, a significant portion of the hillside along the eastern slope of Phase I was preserved. Trails through these woods are planned as of August 2007. The UDO mandates that every dwelling unit be within 1,320 feet (402 meters) of a park or open space, and several neighborhood greens are located across the site.

In addition to the large amount of green space along the creek and wooded hillside, the village green is the most significant open space in Lenox Village. It is prominently located one block east of Nolensville Pike along Lenox Village Drive. The village green is mostly lawn, with a gazebo, a public art piece, and additional landscaping around portions of the perimeter. It is used as a community gathering space, and hosts Lenox Village events such as its Cinco de Mayo festival.

**MIXED USE**

A significant amount of neighborhood retail and mixed-use development is planned at Lenox Village, some of which has been built as of July 2007. The first two projects—a mixed-use building and a small retail center—opened in 2005 and 2006, respectively. A second mixed-use structure will open in 2008. A major mixed-use project, the Village Lifestyle Center, comprising 273 condominiums and 41,000 square feet (3,809 square meters) of office and retail space, will open in phases starting in 2008.

Built in 2005, the first mixed-use structure stands three stories high. Called the Parkview Building, it is located along Lenox Village Drive, which is a good location for neighborhood retail due to the drive-by traffic and number of households within walking distance. It features a row of ground-floor retail space with 20 residential condominiums above it. Condo units sold for $84,000 to $160,000. Retailers include a neighborhood pub, a dry cleaner, a gift shop, a chiropractor, and offices for Regent Homes.

A second, purely retail development opened in 2006. It is located along Nolensville Pike, which provides visibility for retailers, and tenants include a sit-down restaurant, Sprint store, computer repair store, and hair salon.

Another mixed-use structure with 22 residential condominiums above 14,000 square feet (1,300 square meters) of retail space is under construction as of July 2007. Called the Regent Building, it is located at the intersection of Lenox Village Drive and Nolensville Pike. It is due to open in early 2008.

The Village Lifestyle Center is a 273-unit, 41,000-square-foot (3,809-square-meter) mixed-use retail building planned for the south side of Lenox Village Drive along Nolensville Pike. Retail uses include three restaurants, a bookstore, a clothing store, a pay-as-you-go athletic club, and a coffee shop, and will face Nolensville Pike. Parking will be primarily structured. With prices starting at $140,000, condo units will be located above retail, and the project will open in four phases from 2008 to 2010.

An important aspect of the mixed-use and retail developments is that there is no parking requirement under the UDO. The city did not require a certain number of parking spaces based on a formula. Rather, the UDO allows the developer and retailers to negotiate the appropriate amount of stalls. The intent is to somewhat reduce the amount of space used for surface parking and the cost of structured parking. Although retailers still demand sufficient parking, the city and developer agree that this arrangement has resulted in some reduction in the number of spaces. A basic premise of mixing uses is that staggered demand allows for parking to be shared.

**MARKETING AND PERFORMANCE**
Since opening in 2002, 900 units have been sold at Lenox Village, with development occurring well into later phases of the site. Sales velocity increased from 80 units in the first full year of sales (2003) to 250 units in 2006. The developer cites the variety of product as one reason for the high rate of sales, with price points being the other. Regent Homes forecast a 20 percent return on investment for Lenox Village. As of summer 2007, that is being exceeded by 4 to 6 percent.

The developer estimates that sales to various target markets are within 15 percent of forecasts from the market studies and other early market research. The developer also estimates that 23 to 25 percent of all buyers are families with children under the age of 18. Two new schools—an elementary school and a middle school—were built across Nolensville Pike from the site. Coupled with a shift in school districts, Lenox Village has become a more attractive development for parents weighing educational choices for their children. Nonetheless, the vast majority of buyers at Lenox Village are not families, as the market study predicted.

According to McGowan, the range of buyers includes first-time homebuyers, young and middle-aged couples without children, middle-aged mothers living with their adult children, older and younger siblings, gay couples, empty nesters, divorcees, and single mothers. Two firefighters bought residences there, which is remarkable considering the initial resistance by the city fire department to the proposed street widths. The development team hopes that the variety of unit types, household types, and buyers, as well as the mix of uses, creates a true sense of community at Lenox Village.

Four live/work units were built as part of Phase II, but the developer has struggled to find buyers. They will likely be sold as separate commercial and housing units, and the developer probably will not erect any more of them at Lenox Village.

Marketing efforts for the development involve a Web site with links to all housing types, as well as specific press releases for various product types or target markets. Early advertising included numerous press releases and a general theme of aspiring to be like a small traditional Tennessee town.

Regent Homes is releasing a tabloid-style advertisement for the mixed-use Village Lifestyle building that will be sent to every subscriber of the local newspaper and will include unit designs, renderings, and a detailed description of the project. The intent is that it will have a long-term shelf life, and be a piece that can be handed out in the sales office throughout the marketing of the project.

**EXPERIENCE GAINED**

The success of Lenox Village has shown that new urbanism can come at reasonable price points. Regent Homes studied the market, found numerous unmet target markets, created unit designs that catered to their needs, and kept pricing largely affordable in a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use environment.

Regent Homes and LRK are adamant that Lenox Village would not have happened without the leadership and support of Bernhardt and the city of Nashville planning department and planning commission. Lenox Village, as proposed, did not fit existing zoning, and the application of the UDO was the key to moving the project ahead.

A lesson the developer learned with developing at higher densities is that there is little room for error when it comes to utility installation. Typically, subdivisions have leeway for underground infrastructure. The developer learned that with small setbacks, narrow lots, and sidewalks, the margin for error is much less, and that careful oversight of construction management is essential.

The flexibility of design caused a slight issue in one instance. A street that was originally thought would have single-family homes was built with the narrowest street section at Lenox Village. Due to market conditions, however, it was decided that townhouses at a higher density would be built there instead. The higher density,
combined with less off-street parking, led to an increased number of cars parked on the street, particularly at night. This is a relatively minor issue, but something developers and planners should be mindful of.

Another general lesson that can be applied to new urbanist and urban infill projects in particular is to understand your specific needs. A developer should thoroughly understand everything about, and the implications of, the UDO prior to submitting. With a UDO, the developer is drafting its own zoning and must be able to live with it.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>PRODUCT DATA</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>LAND USE INFORMATION</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Percentage complete: 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multifamily units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed-use/multiuse units</td>
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<td>One- and two-bedroom multifamily units</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Retail</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Live/work unit</td>
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<td>Annual rents (per square foot/square meter): approximately $20/$215</td>
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<td>Average length of lease: 3 years</td>
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RETAIL INFORMATION

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<td>Gift/specialty</td>
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Annual rents (per square foot/square meter): approximately $19–$21/$204.25–$225.75

DEVELOPMENT COST INFORMATION

Site acquisition costs (per acre/hectare): $28,000–$65,000/$69,160–$160,550

Site improvement costs (per unit to develop, not including land costs)
- Condominium lot: $9,000
- Townhouse lot: $16,000
- Single-family detached house lot: $22,000
- Live/work lot: $22,000

Construction costs (per square foot/square meter)
- Office: $80/$860
- Retail: $80/$860
- Townhouses and detached houses: $55/$591
- Town center condominiums: $65/$699

Soft costs (per lot)
- Architecture/engineering: $750
- Land planning: $1,500
- Marketing: $250
- Legal/accounting: $50
- Construction interest and fees: $1,000

DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Site purchased: 2001
Planning started: 2001
Construction started: 2001
Sales/leasing started: October 2002
Phase I completed: 2003

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

*From Nashville International Airport:* Merge onto Interstate 40 heading west. After almost 3.5 miles (5.6 kilometers), merge onto Interstate 24 heading east. Five-and-a-half miles (8.9 kilometers) later, take exit 57A going west on Haywood Lane. After traveling 1.6 miles (2.5 kilometers), turn left on Nolensville Pike and continue for three miles (4.8 kilometers), then turn left on Lenox Village Drive and head straight into Lenox Village.

*Driving time:* approximately 25 minutes in nonpeak traffic.

Sam Newberg, report author
Jason Scully, editor, Development Case Studies
David James Rose, copy editor
Joanne Nanez, online production manager
Located in suburban Nashville, Tennessee, Lenox Village is a 208-acre (84-hectare) mixed-use community that will have 1,400 single-family houses and townhouses upon buildout, and a town center comprising additional residential units and office and retail space.
Because Nashville’s existing zoning regulations did not allow for many elements of new urbanist design, the development team worked with the city and architecture firm Looney Ricks Kiss to create an urban design overlay (UDO).
Driven by a set of design guidelines, the UDO establishes building styles, street widths, density, open spaces, and other aspects of development.
Written with the intention of reducing the amount of space used for surface parking and to encourage sharing of spaces, the UDO did not specify any parking requirements for the town center; instead, it lets the developer and retailers negotiate the appropriate number of stalls.
Before the site was developed, a creek running through the property was dammed to create a pond for cattle grazing. The development restored the creek and relocated a rare species of crayfish, the Nashville crayfish, that had once inhabited the pond.
Lenox Village site plan.