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GREEN BUSINESS – Saving energy along the Fox River – Appleton’s Eagle Flats buildings are pilot projects for Energy Star

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When the first residents move into The Landing at Eagle Flats along the Fox River near downtown Appleton this coming February, they’ll have the privilege of living in one of the most energy-efficient multi-family residential buildings in the nation.

That’s because the developers have enrolled both The Landing and River Walk Place, a companion building scheduled for summer completion, in the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Energy Star pilot program for multi-family high-rise buildings.

These two buildings are the first of several projects planned for the space south of the Fox River and west of Lawe Street that was the site of the former Riverside Paper Mill. Partners in the development include Randy Stadtmueller, representing Eagle Flats LLC, and Horizon Development Group of Madison.

“Most people identify Energy Star with energy-efficient appliances, but the certification is gaining a lot of ground in the construction industry,” says John Thode, managing partner with Horizon Development Group. “Sustainability begins with energy efficiency. Horizon Development Group and Eagle Flats LLC are working hard to make sure the new buildings are green and that the energy savings are passed down to our residents.”

Energy Star started its construction program five years ago and expanded it to include multi-family, high-rise residential buildings with four or more stories in 2011.

According to Torrance Kramer, energy advisor with Franklin Energy Services for both Energy Star and Focus on Energy, pilot projects are under way in New York, Oregon and Wisconsin.

“Wisconsin is the leader for the upper Midwest,” says Kramer. “We’ll provide feedback on cold-climate issues to help them tailor the full-blown program.”

The two local buildings will be the third and fourth in Wisconsin to receive this designation.

Kramer’s colleague, Sharon Gould, new construction program manager, is complimentary of the local developers’ energy concerns. “With a multi-family unit, you have a split-meter issue. Since tenants are responsible for energy bills, the developer doesn’t necessarily have the incentive to provide a super-energy-efficient building.”

The Landing at Eagle Flats is a 54-unit workforce housing complex. “A building like this needs a lot of forethought. These are not big-budget buildings, so it was helpful to get all the people around the table to integrate the design wisely,” says Gould.

Everything about the heating and air conditioning systems is Energy Star rated, according to Jim Peterson, project coordinator for the development.

River Walk Place, a 70-unit affordable senior housing community that is already under construction to the west of The Landing, will include the same energy conservation features. It is being developed by the Appleton Housing Authority, and will be the new home of the residents of Washington Place, a senior apartment building in Appleton facing costly repairs. It is scheduled to open next summer.

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