

[« Return to Main Page](#) | [Print](#)

Professional Builder

## Green Live/Work Units Sell Slowly But Surely

By Susan Bady, Senior Editor, Design -- 5/1/2008

Live/work units are a new concept in Sebastopol, Calif., about an hour's drive north of San Francisco. Florence Lofts, a green live/work project five blocks from downtown Sebastopol, has not been an easy sell — but it's catching on.

"For us, live/work is an integral part of putting forward a project that's very sustainable because it eliminates the need to commute," says architect/builder Steve Sheldon, founding partner of IBIS Builds in Sebastopol, developer of Florence Lofts. "But because that kind of product has not really existed here, the challenge is to put it front of the right people."

Florence Lofts consists of 12 live/work lofts and an adjoining 4,200-square-foot commercial building. At press time, the commercial building was partially occupied and three of the lofts had sold. Live/work units are 1,520 square feet and priced from \$775,000 to \$825,000.

The project's extensive utilization of green-building concepts also sets it apart in the market. For example, exterior ground surfaces have permeable paving — 6-inch-thick, pervious concrete that allows water to pass right through it to a layer of drain rock. Whatever doesn't go back into the ground is channeled to a concrete tank filled with gravel and plants. The plant roots absorb toxins from the water, which then flows into city storm drains.

Another system recirculates graywater, storing it in a tank where it will be used for landscape irrigation. "We figure we'll be recycling about 150,000 gallons of water a year for site landscaping," says Sheldon, noting that it's the largest graywater bioremediation system ever built in Sonoma County.

### On the radar

IBIS is targeting advertising and direct mail to entrepreneurs, designers, medical practitioners and other small-business owners. The developer is also making presentations directly to those prospects.

"We're working with the real-estate community, too, because they're basically uneducated about this product, and there's really nothing comparable to it," says Sheldon. "So we're taking them on tours, and gradually, we think that will work for us."

[« Return to Main Page](#) | [Print](#)

© 2008, Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All Rights Reserved.



The ground floor of this live/work unit at Florence Lofts has concrete flooring, one of the project's many green features. The developer, IBIS Builds, is applying for LEED Gold certification. Photo: Doug Johnson.