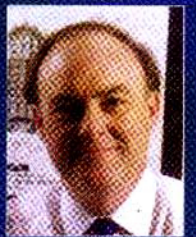


EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

MARK HUMPHREYS, CEO HUMPHREYS & PARTNERS



Mark Humphreys, CEO of Humphreys & Partners Architects LP, discussed some of the key design changes the industry will see in 2004 with MHN senior editor, Maria Siakavellas.

MHN: *What are some of the key architectural innovations occurring right now in the multi-housing sector?*

Humphreys: We've always said that the breezeway-type project is totally out, so the new multifamily low-rise product needs to be non-breezeway product with direct-access garages. In high-rises, [an important innovation] is non-corridor projects. And in many projects, it is [including in designs] small study rooms versus computer desks. This may be just a seven-by-seven room, but people would like to have that with a door on it versus just a computer desk.

We are also seeing innovations in how money is spent on a development. Instead of spending millions of dollars on a clubhouse, spend half that or less and put that money into the units so that they feature granite or a 12-foot deep closet versus a six-foot deep closet. And modern is back in. I'm not saying everything should be modern, because it is not appropriate, but in an urban setting, the glass-and-steel look or the glass-steel-and-brick look is in. We are doing a lot of metal panels on the outside of buildings.

Other trends are island kitchens, which are showing up in almost every one of our projects today;

large walk-in closets; and a shower and a separate tub are also becoming commonplace.

Finally, condos are hot—real hot, especially high-rise projects from 20 to 30 stories.

MHN: *What are some of the key demographic trends the industry will see this year, and how will they affect multi-housing design?*

Humphreys: A specific change that will really be noticed in 2004 is in student and postgraduate residents. That's a really strong market based on the fact that the Echo Boomers are just now starting to come out of college, and we believe this trend will continue because the number of students in college is growing.

That means starter apartments will become stronger and stronger in demand, which means they need to be lower priced but chic. These residents are not going to be interested in living in the suburbs with the same old plans. They would much rather be in an urban environment with a smaller plan where things are hot and happening. This trend is fueling part of the strong demand today for mixed-use developments.

MHN: *What's hot and what's not in terms of finishes?*

Humphreys: Manufacturers such as GE and Whirlpool are coming out with price-sensitive stainless steel appliances. In four years, you will see a majority of new apartment projects with appliances with all-stainless-steel fronts. And today we can buy granite overseas at half the U.S. prices, and an incredible number of our apartment projects are using granite countertops now. We are also looking at lighting as a big change this year. Instead of the standard lighting seen in most apartment projects, we're going with more interesting options such as low voltage.