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today's homes

Rooftop OASIS

Legendary city wind no deterrent to Park Monroe gardener, residents

Gardening or being present in outdoor space has been known to be extremely therapeutic and relaxing. This is more important than ever for people in today's high-stress environment.

One team of downtown high-rise developers recognized the importance and significance of having green and outdoor space for residents. At the luxury high-rise condominium, The Park Monroe, there is a rooftop oasis on the 49th floor. Even though the Lurie Garden at Millennium Park is just steps away from The Park Monroe's front door, the developers, Park Monroe, LLC, knew that residents would still want to enjoy a private outdoor space.

The greatest challenge to creating outdoor space at the top of a condominium in downtown Chicago is clearly the wind. Even in the summer months, the wind comes in from the lake and whips through the other buildings like a Category 1 hurricane. It can be 80 degrees with not a cloud in the sky and the wind gusts can keep downtown condo owners from sitting outside, barbecuing in the afternoon or even just enjoying a cup of coffee with the newspaper on their balcony.

To combat the bothersome wind, the developers had the brilliant idea to add floor-to-ceiling windows along the rooftop deck, keeping the space open aired by not adding a ceiling. In other words, residents have floor-to-ceiling windows to capture the panoramic views of Lake Michigan, Millennium Park and Grant Park, but the rooftop deck itself is open to the sky. The glass design at The Park Monroe allows residents to enjoy the outdoor space and grill and entertain in peace without the 30-mph wind tunnel.

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Personal oasis: On a beautiful summer day, residents and guests can relax in the outdoor rooftop hot tub located on the 49th floor at The Park Monroe. | SUBMITTED PHOTO



Beautification process: Jamie Hoffman plants multi-colored vincas and lavender perennials to add fragrance and texture to The Park Monroe rooftop garden. | SUBMITTED PHOTO

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After considering several outdoor designers, the developers at The Park Monroe chose Jamie Hoffman to fulfill the vision of an outdoor sanctuary. Jamie has a passion for horticulture. As she puts it, she "loves plants and the geekiness of the science behind them." She sees a garden as "a living work of

art. It's temperamental, easily stressed, moody and much like a baby. It tells its caregiver when it needs to be fed, changed or moved."

Jamie's concept was to add warmth and a cozy feeling to the outdoor space that was initially gray concrete. Jamie used a variety of Coleus and tall grasses for the areas with

low light. She complimented the bright, rainbow colors of the Coleus with Magenta and Feather Ferns. Colorful Petunias were added along with Ornamental Peppers for interest. She also incorporated compact trees and Dwarf Pines to add height and dimension to the landscaping.

Jamie wanted to fill the area of the sundeck that surrounds the hot tub, the lap-pool and the fitness cen-

ter with texture, beauty and fragrance. To accomplish this, multi-colored annuals were planted. The colorful annuals include Gerbera Daisies, Vincas and Dahlias. These flowers incorporate a variety of color in the daytime. In the evening, the entire area is still bright with the luminescent colors of the flowers.

With so much thought put into the design, the outdoor garden clearly looks sensa-

tional. It is a beautiful place for residents at The Park Monroe to relax or entertain. The Zen-like garden opens to an entertainment suite with a full catering kitchen and amazing vistas of Lake Michigan.

In addition to the 49th floor rooftop, there is an outdoor sundeck built exclusively for penthouse owners. Jamie plans to landscape it this summer by creating a lush wall of drought-tolerant plants to absorb sound and to encase the area in a wall of tropical green space.

Jamie Hoffman not only designs commercial space with large budgets. She also provides service for individual condo owners that want to beautify their terrace or balcony. Jamie's Web site is www.chicagoeearth.com.

Other luxury amenities at The Park Monroe include a surround-sound theatre that accommodates large gatherings of residents and friends and an indoor lap pool and fitness center. There is also a 24-hour door

staff and full-time property management.

Residences still available at The Park Monroe range from one-bedroom, two-bedroom, two-bedroom-plus-den to fabulous two-story penthouses. Many of the homes feature private outdoor balconies and all have gourmet kitchens with European styling, luxurious baths and premium hardwood floors. Designer touches are evident throughout, with elegant details, fine appointments and premium fixtures.

Prices are attractive for new contracts at this time, from 20 percent to more than 30 percent below the building's previous pricing. The prices start in the upper \$200,000s for one-bedrooms and the mid \$400,000s for two-bedrooms. Two-story penthouses are available.

The models and sales center at 65 East Monroe are open seven days a week and those interested can call 312-855-0550 or visit ParkMonroe.com for more information.



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Del Webb hosting seminar on selling

Grand Dominion by Del Webb, a community in Mundelein for those ages 55 and older, is hosting a presentation on "Selling your House in Today's Market" on Saturday, April 30, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The seminar is designed to help and encourage homebuyers to move forward with their new lives. Kevin Terry with Coldwell Banker will

facilitate the discussion and provide insights and advice as to what it takes to get a house sold in 2011.

Grand Dominion is designed around a 13-acre natural lake, taking advantage of rolling topography and beautiful views to create the perfect setting for 55-and-over living. With nearly 100 acres of open space, Grand Dominion is relaxed and peaceful. The Lakeside Lodge features a state-of-the-art fitness center, indoor and outdoor pools, bocce and tennis courts and walking trails along the shores of Lake Dominion. Single-family homes range from 1,197 to 2,833 square feet and start in the affordable low \$240,000s.

Space is limited, so call 847-949-0033 to check availability.

Del Webb 55-and-over communities began with the original Sun City, which opened outside Phoenix, Ariz., in 1960, and have grown to include more than 50 communities currently open for new home sales in 21 states. For more information on Del Webb, see www.delwebb.com.

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