



ACCESS TO a fleet of cars is a perk with these lofts.

EUREKA

Living Green

What if your condo came with an entire lot full of shared cars?

When residents start moving into the Forbes Park Redevelopment project in Chelsea in fall 2006, they'll get more than loft condominiums for their \$250,000. The developer, Somerville-based Davis Design/Development Corp., plans to offer access to a fleet of fuel-efficient cars, too. The development will have 225 residential units, commercial space, and more than 100 shared autos. (An as-yet-undetermined user fee will be charged to tenant drivers.)

The Forbes project – the only one like it in the country, according to Davis Design and the Green Building Council, an industry group in Washington, D.C. – is selling itself as an ecologically friendly community. That means solar heating and a system that uses captured rainwater to flush toilets and irrigate gardens. So-called green cars are part of the same ethic. Davis Design partner Blair Galinsky is betting these features will appeal to the professional “creative types” who are the target tenants.

“Their consumer decisions have many levels of meaning. It’s not just buying a car,” he says. “It’s to make a political statement.” His favorite anti-SUV, right now, is the Smart Car by Mercedes-Benz. Just 8 feet long and resembling an enclosed golf cart, the European two-seater wrings 60 miles in the city out of every gallon of fuel.

The tiny Smart Cars reflect Davis Design’s urban orientation. They’re not fans of the suburbs. “We don’t want to ever go out there,” declares architect Doug Bill, who says he wants to see more green space and less asphalt. Tenants will be welcome to move in with their own cars, of course. They should just be prepared to keep them in a remote lot, while the fleet cars will be parked next to the condo buildings. With fewer trips between lot and door to transport those heavy bags of organic groceries, that will save even more gas.

– Rich Barlow