

Rendering courtesy of Flaherty and Collins



210 Trade will be more than fifty stories tall and feature a half-acre pool deck. Below, many of the amenities at Trademark are located on the building's seventh-floor terrace, overlooking Bank of America Stadium.

## The Great Amenity Race

*As downtown becomes awash in condo high-rises, developers are attempting to outdo each other with luxurious amenities*

**T**HERE WAS A TIME WHEN A SECURITY GATE, a swimming pool, and a stationary bike were all you needed to satisfy the demands of the average condo dweller.

Now, expectations are rising just like the nine (as of late October) residential towers in various stages of development in Charlotte's center city. Seems the heights of condo luxury are limited only by the imaginations of developers, who appear to be one-upping each other with promises of amenities specifically designed to convince buyers they can escape the fuses of single-family suburban living without having to endure any urban discomforts.

Secured parking is de rigeur, but for those still concerned about center-city safety, **The Vue** developers say they plan to take it a notch higher with biometric-fingerprinting scanning, which will allow only owners to have free access to the building. Others will need to go through doormen, on duty twenty-four hours a day, who will



Rendering courtesy of Boulevard Centro

stand watch over the grand lobby of the 410-unit building slated for the corner of Fifth and Pine streets.

And if your dog awakens you for a midnight potty break, there's no need to venture out into the dark urban night in your PJs. A strip of green grass, known as a pet park, is planned for the fifty-story building's amenity deck, which also touts a junior Olympic-size *(continued on page 28)*

## Hot Properties

*A look at some of the more interesting homes on the recent market*

**Location:** 3245 Jackson Road, Mooresville, Rowan County

**Price:** \$2,995,000

**Size:** 6,800 square feet, 137 acres

**Details:** This contemporary estate home has a sleek leather-and-chrome interior befitting young NASCAR Nextel Cup driver Jeremy Mayfield, who has lived there for about five years. The grounds include a 1,000-square-foot pool house, a horse barn, racecar stalls, an oval dirt track and a large pond stocked with fish. Mayfield and wife Shana have recently purchased an even bigger home, with more land, closer to his racing shop.

**Location:** 626 El Cardenal Farms Lane, Mooresville, Rowan County

**Price:** \$4.5 million

**Size:** 8,690 square-feet, 138 acres

**Details:** Built for retired NASCAR legend Ernie Irvan and wife Kim in 2002 by Simonini Builders, the slate-roofed home sits on a 138-acre horse farm where the couple has bred and trained Paso-Fino horses. Includes a twenty-stall barn, riding trails, and a pond.



615 Charles Avenue, NoDa

**Location:** 615 Charles Avenue, NoDa

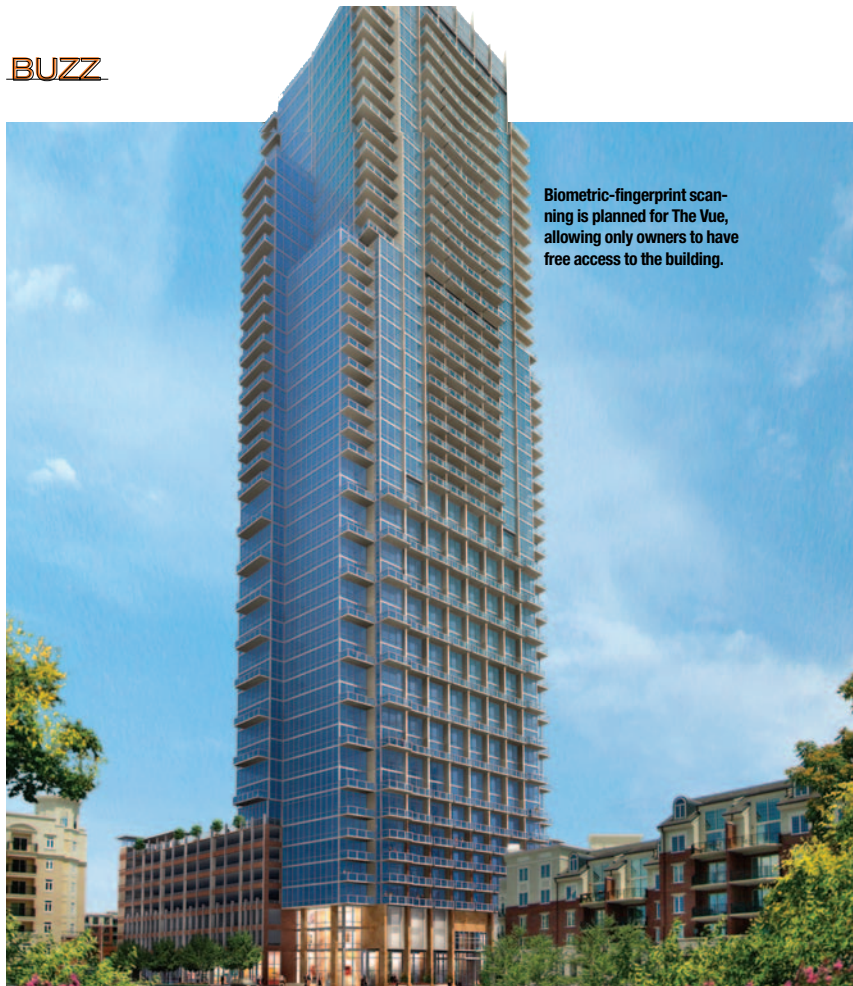
**Listed:** \$322,500

**Sold:** \$317,500

**Size:** 2,100 square feet

**On the market:** 19 days

**Details:** Architectural designer Ellis Vestal and wife Angie bought an 800-square-foot, 1905 mill home in 2001 and transformed it into this postmodern farmhouse with three bedrooms and two baths. A job transfer foiled their plan to live there for many years.



Biometric-fingerprint scanning is planned for The Vue, allowing only owners to have free access to the building.

## Amenity Race *(continued from page 27)*

swimming pool and sports court, says Ashley Nordan, The Vue's marketing manager.

The seventh-floor terrace at the twenty-eight-story **Trademark**, developer David Furman's West Trade Street project, will also include a dog walk, as well as a lavish pool area with a walk-through waterfall, a fire pit, and an outdoor pool table, all overlooking Bank of America Stadium.

The sporty set might also find a home at **210 Trade**, where owners at the 404-unit, fifty-plus-story building will enjoy a half-acre pool deck, a high-end workout facility with outdoor yoga area, and a putting green.

Longtime local engineer and developer Pete Verna is also planning a putting green for his project, **The Park**. The three cups in the fifteen-foot-by-thirty-five-foot swath of grass in the rooftop park will be rearranged each month to keep things challenging at the 107-unit, twenty-one-story building in Second Ward, says Verna.

Verna also designed an extra-tidy trash disposal system, which will have homeowners taking compacted waste from their unit to a super-speedy dumbwaiter-size elevator. The

elevator will zip the blocks of garbage to a conveyor belt leading to the building Dumpster.

Novare Group is loading **Avenue**, its thirty-six-story tower, with high-tech features. All 386 units will include "ultra" high-speed Internet service and prewiring for satellite and cable TV and home audio packages, says Novare Communications Director Cathy High. A tenth-floor amenity terrace will be home to a clubroom with a video gaming area where residents can play GameCube and Xbox games, as well as Internet kiosks where they can check their e-mail. The lobby of the Fourth Ward building will include a virtual art gallery, where rotating art will be displayed on flat-screen monitors.

The leanest amenity package is probably at **Courtside**, which like Trademark is being developed by Furman's Boulevard Centro. It offers a rooftop terrace with barbecue grill and environmentally friendly bamboo floors, but not much else.

Furman says it was the first in the parade of residential high-rise projects to be announced, and that was before the condo competition really heated up. He says he upped the ante at Trademark, though it doesn't have a concierge and doorman, as

many of the other projects are offering.

"Once you put someone on the payroll, your homeowners' dues go up dramatically," says Furman.

That's the upside to being low on the amenity scale. Courtside, with sixteen floors and 104 units overlooking the new basketball arena, has probably the lowest homeowners' dues at twenty cents a square foot, or \$200 a month for the owner of a 1,000-square-foot unit. Most others seem to be falling closer to the twenty-seven- or thirty-cents-per-

### Expensive Space

Each square foot of center-city condominium living has been getting more precious by the month. Here's the median price per square foot of downtown condos sold in May, June and July of this year, and in the same period for the two years prior.

**May/June/July 2003: \$169**

**May/June/July 2004: \$203**

**May/June/July 2005: \$228**

Source: First American Real Estate Solutions, Anaheim, CA.

square-foot range or higher, though many have not been officially set yet.

Of course, the concierge will want to get paid for arranging your dinner reservations or receiving your FedEx packages. And someone will have to fix the thermostat if it conks out in the community wine vault at The Vue or Two Ten Tryon.

Residential real estate analyst Emma Littlejohn of the Littlejohn Group says this is more than just a case of one-upmanship. It reflects a cultural shift.

"People have less time to do the fun things they want to do," she says. "If they can walk their dog and pick up their coffee right on site, that's a major plus."

It seems the downtown-amenity standard has been raised, and some extras—such as wireless Internet access and dry cleaning drop-off and pick up—have practically become a given.

Perhaps the most creative amenity being offered is the car-detailing service at amenity-packed **230 South Tryon**, a 120-unit condominium conversion project slated for completion next year.

Of course, residents probably won't need it very often.

Once they move downtown, they can walk pretty much everywhere they need to go, right? —*Jen Pilla Taylor*