

NEW CENTRAL

By Jim Hackler

Today's TNDs blend environmental sensitivity with a popular and thoughtful planning approach.



TRAD





ITIONS

For a significant number of home buyers, the American Dream is no longer the big house in the suburbs. A 2006 study of housing preferences by Arthur Nelson, director of urban affairs and planning at Virginia Tech, found that nearly 40 percent of today's consumers prefer attached housing, compared with 25 percent in the past. And while a little more than 50 percent of today's occupied homes are single-family detached on large lots, the percentage of consumers who say they actually want that type of housing is as low as 25 percent.

"We have more 'McMansions' than there is a market for," says John Norquist, president and CEO of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU), a nonprofit membership group that advocates traditional neighborhood development (TND) as the alternative to sprawl. "Because of a demographic shift to smaller families, single parents, and no-

kid households, there's more of a demand for urban products such as condos and townhouses."

Given such trends, Norquist (who is also the former mayor of Milwaukee) asserts that a well-designed TND is not only desirable, it's more environmental. "Tightening up the development pattern, encouraging density that's pleasant to live in, and creating more walkability means less energy consumption and less CO₂ production," he says.

The CNU estimates there are more than 200 TNDs built or under construction in the United States. While all of them are inherently environmental based on Norquist's assertion, we've profiled six TNDs that combine appealing site plans with earth-friendly features such as geothermal heating and cooling, natural stormwater retention plans, and energy-efficient home designs.

COMMON TND FEATURES

- > Integrated residential and commercial zones in the community
- > Town center that is often a square or green
- > Streets laid out in a grid pattern with no cul-de-sacs
- > Buildings in the neighborhood center with little or no setback
- > Elementary schools within walking distance of all residences
- > Small parks or playgrounds scattered throughout



ALYS BEACH, FLORIDA

Noted planning firm DPZ creates a second-generation TND.

Alys Beach is only six miles away from Seaside, Fla., where the first “new” traditional neighborhood development became a reality in 1981. Like Seaside, Alys Beach is designed by noted planning firm Duany Plater-Zyberk and Co., which was asked to create a “dream community.” The architects and planners drew inspiration from the whitewashed buildings of Bermuda and Antigua, Guatemala, and then added modern construction techniques to help the homes withstand a major hurricane.

“Beauty and durability are the two main guiding forces that make it a more sustainable community,” says Christian Wagley, Alys Beach’s environmental program manager. “When you build something of beauty, it doesn’t get torn down. The other thing is by building very well-made masonry structures, we’re building things that are very durable and

are meant to last for centuries.”

Wagley joined the project three years ago to help Alys Beach achieve new levels in green design and construction. He’s been working with the U.S. Department of Energy’s Building America program to establish Alys Beach as a demonstration project for hot and humid climates. Thanks to advanced products such as spray foam insulation and low-E windows, the homes are 25 percent more energy efficient than others in the area, Wagley says.

The Alys Beach homes also use a new practice that Building America is advocating: sealed attics. By eliminating vents to the exterior, it makes it easier to control air leakage at the top of the homes as well as prevent moisture-laden outside air from entering the attic and causing condensation problems.

While new products and techniques are making the homes more environmentally

Alys Beach’s breezy courtyard-centric designs were inspired by homes found in Antigua, Guatemala.





friendly, Wagley says something as simple as color choice is having a big impact. “When you look at our town, it’s all white. In the heat of the sun, the buildings just stay cooler.”

The homes at Alys Beach also feature white tiles on the roofs, a standard practice in Florida before the introduction of air conditioning. A study by the Florida Solar Energy Center found that switching a house from black asphalt shingles to white tiles reduced energy use by an average of 19 percent.

The next project on the to-do list is an edible landscape. “One of the things I want to do in some of our little park spaces is to



introduce orchards,” Wagley says. “We have some plans to put in blueberries, figs trees, and cold hardy citrus such as persimmon and kumquats to try to introduce the idea that our landscape can not only be beautiful, but feed us as well.”

TNDetails: Alys Beach **Built:** 5% **Acres:** 160 **Mix:** 600 homes, 177,000 square feet of commercial space, and a 60-room inn **Sales prices:** \$1.2 million to \$1.9 million **Community space:** Environmental center, 18 acres of town parks, 21-acre wetland preserve, a health and fitness club, an amphitheater, a non-denominational church, recreational facilities, a town center, and 1,500 feet of beachfront **Designer:** Duany Plater-Zyberk and Co. **Developer:** EBSCO Industries **Builders:** Artisan Builders, Breau Construction, Elliott Construction, Ficarra Builders, Koast Builders **Under construction:** Broke ground in 2004 with a projected 15-year buildout **Online:** www.alysbeach.com

All homes and streets in Alys Beach are carefully oriented to allow residents to enjoy passive heating from the sun and cooling from the Gulf breezes.

Alys Beach’s “Caliza Pool” is a 50’ x 100’ pool (shown under construction at left) that uses salt instead of chlorine to disinfect the water. It’s the largest of its kind in the area.

Development Features: Alys Beach

- > Certified by the Institute for Business and Home Safety, a national nonprofit that works to incorporate the latest disaster-resistant features, enhancements, and construction technologies in new homes.
- > Built to Florida Green Building Coalition standards.
- > 21-acre preserve contains wetlands and a longleaf pine forest.
- > Employs a full-time on-site environmental program manager.
- > Passive solar design. Homes are also oriented to capture Gulf breezes, with every street an open thoroughfare to the Gulf of Mexico.
- > White exterior walls and rooftops reflect the sunlight.
- > Pavers hand-set in gravel minimize stormwater runoff from parking lots and streets by allowing 35 percent of rainfall to filter directly into the ground.



GRAYSLAKE, ILLINOIS.

Prairie Crossing preserves a sense of community while conserving land.

Prairie Crossing demonstrates that a conservation community can embrace the same principles as a TND. Located an hour northwest of Chicago in Grayslake, Ill., the project was just a stretch of farmland bordering the 5,800-acre Liberty Prairie Reserve when it broke ground in 1992.

“We set out to save as much open land as possible,” says Vicky Ranney, president of Prairie Holdings Corp. “We have been able to save more than 60 percent, which is now functioning as an organic farm, restored prairie, and wetlands.”

Ranney says the planning principles of a TND are very compatible with land conservation plans because homes and a town center are generally clustered close together, allowing larger areas of green space. She says the movement also places importance on creating connections by establishing “third places,” which are locations beyond home or work. In the case of Prairie Crossing, a restored 1885 dairy barn serves as a community center, and an extensive network of trails and a beach are popular gathering spots for residents.

“We swim in the lake and use it for

all kinds of water sports that are not mechanized, like canoeing and sailing,” says Ranney. “We have very little runoff into the lake because of our stormwater management plan that uses swales and a variety of plants that keep toxins from the water. Our lakes are so clean that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources uses them for raising endangered species of fish.”

Prairie Crossing’s newest phase revolves around the project’s two rail stations. The first station opened in 1996 and the second eight years later. Ranney says they’re building shops, restaurants, and condos that will offer an urbanized setting and an easy train ride to downtown Chicago or O’Hare International Airport. “At one point we had an American Airlines pilot here who would bike to the station, take the train to the airport, and then take his 10 a.m. flight to San Francisco.”

Sales continue to be strong, even with the area’s housing downturn. Ranney says a market study showed Prairie Crossing homes getting 34 percent more per square foot, which shows the demand for this type of development.

TNDetails: Prairie Crossing **Built:** 95% **Acres:** 675 **Project cost:** \$170 million **Residential units:** 395 **Sales prices:** \$179,900 to \$600,000-plus **Green space:** 470 acres **Design team:** William Johnson, Peter Schaudt, and Steven Apfelbaum of Applied Ecological Sciences; Peter Calthorpe of Calthorpe Associates, and Phil Enquist of Skidmore Owings and Merrill; Margaret McCurry, Rick Phillips, and James Nagle **Developers:** Charles Shaw, Frank Martin, and Prairie Holdings Corp. **Builders:** Shaw Homes and Prairie Holdings Corp. **Under construction:** 1992–2008
Online: www.prairiecrossing.com

In 1996, Prairie Crossing became the first community-scale Building America project in the country. A study for the Department of Energy estimated the additional upfront costs on each home to be \$1,500, but that the homeowners would save \$500 a year in reduced energy costs.



Development Features: Prairie Crossing

- > Transit stations with service to downtown Chicago and O’Hare International Airport
- > A rehabbed 1885 timber-frame barn that serves as a community center
- > 60% of development is legally protected open land.
- > 10 miles of walking, biking, and horseback riding trails
- > Energy-efficient homes designed under the Building America Program
- > LEED-certified charter school
- > Stormwater treatment with native plants flows into swales.
- > 90-acre certified organic farm with rentable garden plots

NORTH CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Noisette launches an economic and riverside renaissance.

One of the largest traditional neighborhood developments in the country is Noisette in North Charleston, S.C. Covering more than 3,000 acres, the project is redefining the role between developer and city.

"Noisette operates at the social, the environmental, and the economic level," says John Knott, the president, CEO, and co-founder of the Noisette Co. "It isn't just about green building and energy efficiency; it's really about healing and creating a 'just' community that works on every level."

In a public-private partnership, the Noisette Co. and the city of North Charleston teamed up in the late 1990s to revitalize the city. In exchange for the right to purchase 350 acres of the old Navy base, Noisette agreed to launch a comprehensive planning effort on an unprecedented scale. "We met with more than 4,000 residents to create a footprint for the redevelopment and revitalization of North Charleston," Knott says. "It took us two and a half years to fully engage the community to understand what they liked about the area, what they didn't like, and what they thought was missing."

Thanks to this input, the Noisette master plan received strong community support, Knott says, and the project also has attracted more than \$900 million in public and private investment. "The economic turnaround has been way faster than we expected," he says. "Existing housing that used to sell for \$54 a square foot and stay on the market for 270 days is now going for \$170 a square foot and selling in about 45 days."

While it's rare for a developer to be so closely involved in an entire city's economic future, the investment is paying off for the Noisette Co. "Our plans for the old Navy



Yard got approved in eight weeks—with no opposition," Knott says. "So the money we spent in rebuilding the neighborhood organizational structures was cheaper than what we'd spend on your average zoning fights with this type of density. That could have taken three years—in some places, seven—and often what you end up with is a lot of people who are pretty angry."

Knott believes master community developers have the unique multidisciplinary experience to transform economically and socially depressed communities into vibrant and prosperous places to live. "That's when sustainability really starts to work," the North Charleston developer says.

One of Noisette's most attractive natural features is the Cooper River, which residents can enjoy through the new Riverfront Park.

The Noisette Co. was contracted by the city to redevelop Century Oaks. All of the homes at the newly named Oak Terrace Preserve will be EarthCraft homes.

Development Features: Noisette

- > 15-acre riverfront park
- > 100 acres of green space
- > Restored powerhouse now houses the city's cultural arts department
- > Navy Yard Historic District and Navy Yard Officers' Housing Historic District
- > Chicora Park, which was designed in 1890s by Frederick Law Olmsted
- > Bioswales, green roofs, pervious pavement
- > Participant in LEED-ND (Neighborhood Development) pilot program

TNDetails: Noisette **Built:** 5% **Acres:** 350 (old naval yard) and 3,000 for Noisette planning overlay **Uses:** 50% residential, 50% commercial **Residential units:** 5,400 **Sales prices:** \$200,000 and up **Design team:** Burt Hill; BNIM **Architects:** Davis & Floyd **Developer:** Noisette Co. **Under construction:** 2003 and beyond **Online:** www.noisettesc.com

LAKESWOOD, COLORADO

Belmar reinvents an aging shopping mall, creating a new residential, commercial, and cultural hotspot in suburban Denver.

Belmar is a lesson in how to reinvent an obsolete shopping mall into the cultural and business focal point of a city. Named after the Lakewood, Colo., estate of heiress May Bonfils, Belmar is becoming so popular that it's drawing residents away from Denver's trendy Lower Downtown Historic District, which is known as "LoDo."

"We're getting empty-nesters looking to scale down," says Matt Stokes, Belmar development director. "We're also attracting the 'urban hipster' which is somebody who can afford a loft in LoDo, but they can get something with as much square footage for almost half the cost that's also new construction."

Stokes says he's also been pleasantly surprised at the response to Belmar's commercial space. With more than 200,000 square feet of office space, Belmar is 100 percent leased and getting some of the highest rents in the area. "Businesses like the fact that their employees can work in the area and spill out onto the streets for lunch and then come back to work," he says. "It's a very convenient experience."

There's a lot to experience at Belmar after work, too: restaurants, shops, a movie theater, and a central plaza that turns into an ice skating rink in the winter. One of the community's most unique cultural features is The Lab, a contemporary art center that hosts exhibitions, lectures, publications, and activities exploring contemporary art and ideas. Stokes recounts a recent "mixed taste" presentation at The Lab that began with a look at Walt Whitman and ended with the lowdown on whole-hog cooking.



The streetscape experience is equally important to the cultural arts sense. "You want to have the streets and retail storefronts engage the pedestrians as they walk down the street," Stokes



says. "We're using a lot of brick and masonry."

The project also pays homage to green principles. "With respect to the green products, we're trying to keep everything sourced within a 50-mile radius," says Stokes. "We're also looking at deploying 1.8 megawatts of solar power that would be located on top of the parking garages. It's not definite yet, but it's a goal. We're constantly pushing ourselves to make Belmar a better place to live."

The annual Festival Italiano is one of the most popular events held at Belmar. It includes flag throwers from Florence, Italy; regional Italian wine tastings, chef demonstrations, and a children's grape stomp.

Belmar includes a small urban wind farm. Located on fourteen light poles, the turbines collectively generate approximately 400 watts of power at a wind speed of 28 mph.

Development Features: Belmar

- > The Lab, a contemporary art and ideas institution
- > Streets designed to accommodate routine closure for public markets.
- > New city hall, library, cultural facility, and heritage center across the street
- > LEED-certified commercial buildings
- > 200,000 tons of concrete and two million square feet of asphalt recycled on-site
- > 10 acres of parks and green space
- > Transplant and reuse of 150-plus mature trees
- > Energy Star-certified townhomes

TNDetails: Belmar **Built:** 70% **Acres:** 104 **Project cost:** \$850 million **Residential units:** 782 **Sales prices:** \$180,000 to \$1 million-plus **Designers:** Elkus Manfredi Architects; QPK Design; Van Meter Williams Pollack; ArchitectureDenver; Civitas; EDAW; Fehlman LaBarre; Belzberg Architects; MB Consulting **Developers:** Continuum Partners **Builders:** Continuum Partners, McStain Neighborhoods, TCR, Harvard Communities, New Providence Co., Sunburst Design **Under construction:** 2004-2009 **Online:** www.belmarcolorado.com

TACOMA, WASHINGTON

HOPE VI development Salishan opens TND living to more than wealthy buyers.

Salishan dispels the myth that traditional neighborhood developments only cater to upscale or exclusive clients. Originally built during World War II as temporary housing for Tacoma, Wash.'s military workers, Salishan's infrastructure began to fail and its homes fall apart. Owner Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) decided to replace the 855 substandard homes with an equal number of new affordable units while adding a mix of market-rate housing. Thanks to HOPE VI funding, the authority made the project happen.

"One goal was to increase the number of dwelling units," says Janet Rice, director of housing development for the Tacoma Housing Authority. "We committed to homeownership mixed with rental, and mixed-income housing, which we saw as essential to create economical stability for the community." Salishan will also include special housing for seniors and the homeless.

Demand has been strong, with phase one of the rental and for-sale units completed. "They're all sold," Rice says. "They're all occupied, and they look lovely."

In addition to providing new homes, the redevelopment of Salishan is employing many community residents. Rice, who calls it "spending your dollar twice," says the housing authority has exceeded its hiring goals, with more than 90 percent of its workers coming from public housing or tax credit communities in Tacoma.

Another important objective is smart building, which means green principles and practices. "We feel green is a tool that will



help us build better buildings," Rice says. "As a housing authority, we are committed to Salishan at a minimum for 55 years, so we approached our development as a long-term owner. We have a real responsibility to use these public dollars in a prudent manner and to create a project that is well-designed and long-lasting." Rice's favorite green feature at Salishan? The network of bioswales that serve as the community's stormwater management system. "They have beautiful rocks with trees surrounding them, so it really integrates nicely into the neighborhood," she says.

Rice hopes to do similar things with other housing projects in the area. "We know this is an area that there are too few participants, but Tacoma Housing Authority has made a commitment to be a leader in the region for green development."



Salishan's homes are designed to accommodate people and families throughout all stages of their lives, so they include living space and floor plans that would work for elderly or extended family members.

Salishan features family parks with bioswales, which reduces runoff into a neighborhood salmon stream.

Development Features: Salishan

- > Affordable and subsidized housing
- > Medical and dental clinic
- > Senior housing
- > 12.2 acres of parks and green space
- > Homes certified by the Master Builders Association of Pierce County and Energy Star
- > Bioswales

TNDetails: Salishan **Built:** 30% **Acres:** 200 **Project cost:** \$225 million **Residential units:** 1,175-1,380 **Sales prices:** \$225,000 average **Design team:** Torti Gallas and Partners **Developers:** Tacoma Housing Authority, Lorig Associates **Builders:** Habitat for Humanity, Quadrant Homes, Tacoma Housing Authority (rentals) **Under construction:** 2004-2011 **Online:** www.salishan.net

ATLANTA

Glenwood Park creates eco-friendly living in the heart of the city.

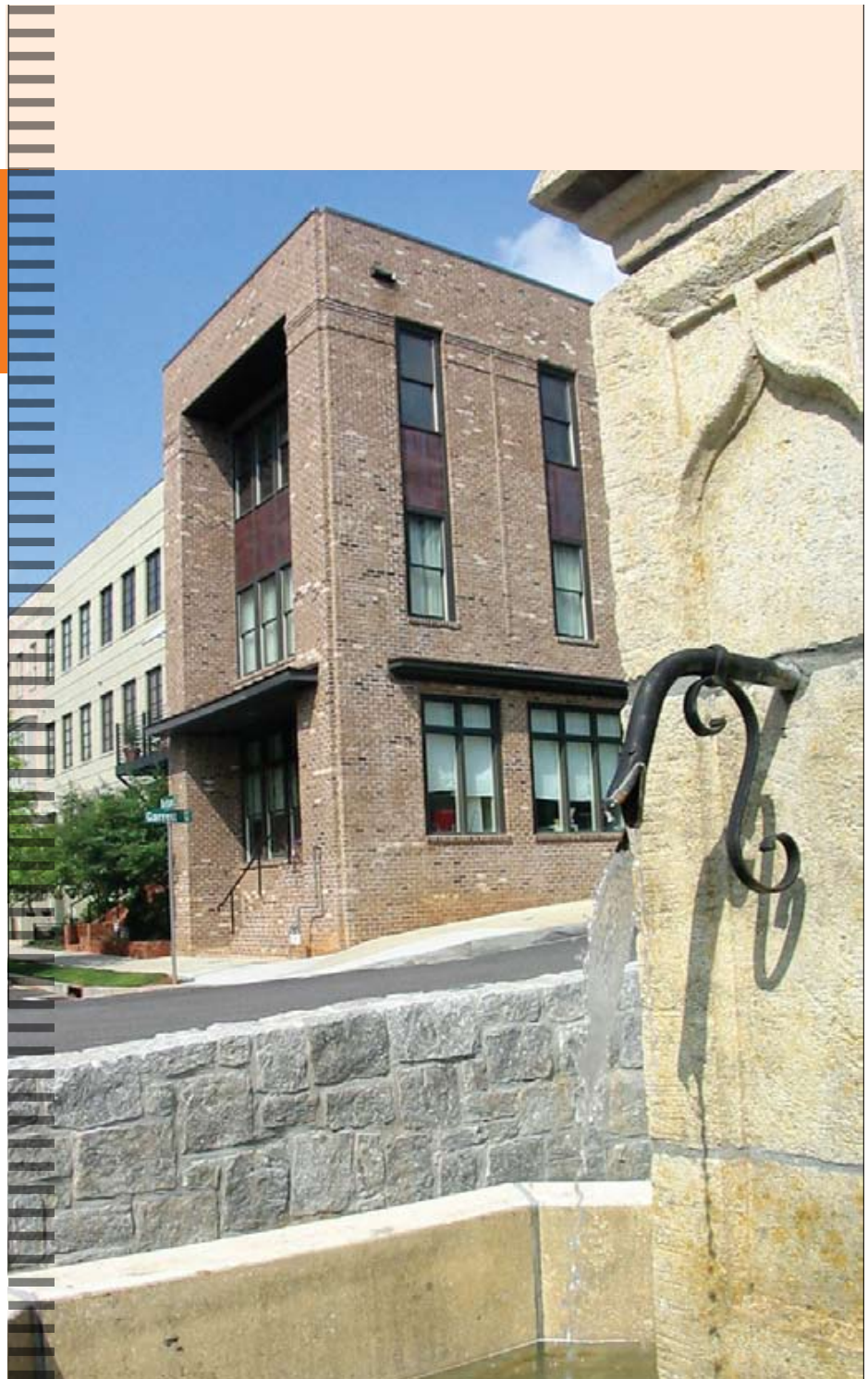
As you walk along the shops and grand porches that line the homes in Glenwood Park, it's hard to imagine that less than a decade ago this development was a concrete recycling plant. Glenwood Park is notable for other reasons as well. Located fewer than two miles from downtown Atlanta, it is the first TND in the Georgia capital's city limits.

"It was a real challenge to get through the permitting process," says Walter Brown, vice president of Green Street Properties. "We wanted narrower streets and tighter corners that weren't allowed under the current regulations. After some lengthy discussions with city officials, we were able to get approval that resulted in a new TND city ordinance."

Green Street knew what they were doing. Today, Glenwood Park is winning industry awards and is cited as an example of how to develop an infill site. It represents the first project by Green Street, established by MindSpring Internet service provider Charles Brewer. Designed as a showcase for green building, Glenwood Park requires 100 percent of its homes to be certified EarthCraft Houses, the green building program of the Southface Energy Institute and the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association. The developers were concerned about that requirement at first, but it hasn't been a problem.

"We ended up bringing on home builders that were either already doing EarthCraft, or were familiar with it," says Brown. "We really have to give credit to the strength of the program and how supportive they've been."

Glenwood Park's other environmental features include geothermal heating and cooling and a stormwater retention pond that also provides a water feature in the neighborhood's central park. It also uses pervious pavement to slow stormwater runoff, but Brown cautions



that the project's tight urban design has been a little difficult to integrate with the product. "Timing is everything," he says. "If you put it in before all of your utilities and telephone lines are in, it winds up being whacked and chopped up. Pervious pavement is probably more appropriate for a strictly single-family residential application where there is less pressure on the land around where you're working." GB

According to traffic statistics, Glenwood Park's urban setting and high density will save 1.6 million miles of driving per year over what residents would have driven if they lived in a "typical" new Atlanta development.



Brasfield Square's design is patterned after European villages. It's become a popular gathering spot not only for Glenwood Park residents, but those who live in nearby neighborhoods too.



Glenwood Park was chosen as one of the top greenest places to live by *Organic Lifestyle* magazine.

Development Features: Glenwood Park

- > Membership-based pool open to the surrounding community
- > Town center that includes shops, restaurants, and services
- > Two parks with community garden and dog run
- > All homes are required to meet EarthCraft House standards.
- > Roads are paved with recycled materials.
- > Recycled stormwater irrigates public areas.
- > More than 1,000 trees planted

TNDetails: Glenwood Park **Built:** 75% **Acres:** 28 **Project cost:** \$150 million **Residential:** 375 **Sales prices:** \$140,000 to \$1 million **Project designers:** Stevens & Wilkinson Stang & Newdow; Surber Barber Choate & Hertlein; Smith Dalia Architects; Historical Concepts; Dover, Kohl & Partners; Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh and Associates **Developers:** Green Street Properties **Builders:** Green Street Properties, Hedgewood Homes, Capstone Partners, and Whitehall Homes **Under construction:** 2001-2008 **Online:** www.glenwoodpark.com