



Circle 118 townhouses by WXZ Development add life to University Circle in Cleveland

By Steven Litt, The Plain Dealer

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Chris
Bongorno,
University
Circle Inc.

The Circle 118 townhouses add a splash of color in University Circle.

You have to admire a developer willing, if not eager, to build attractive new urban housing on a difficult site next to a major railroad overpass in Cleveland.

James Wymer, president of **WXZ Development Inc.** in Fairview Park, recently added significant value to University Circle with the first six townhouse units in his \$8 million **Circle 118** project at East 118th Street and Euclid Avenue.

The development has brightened a once dreary corner of district and created a strong sense of entry west of the elevated rail lines that mark the psychological eastern edge of the neighborhood.

The first thing westbound motorists on Euclid Avenue see when they emerge from under the rail bridge is Circle 118.

Designed by **RDL Architects** of Shaker Heights, the townhouses sport colorful geometric facades accented by blue panels of a laminated plastic and wood-fiber board material made in Italy.

Glassy bedrooms on the second floors of the townhouses cantilever over sidewalks and are trimmed in red-painted metal panels.

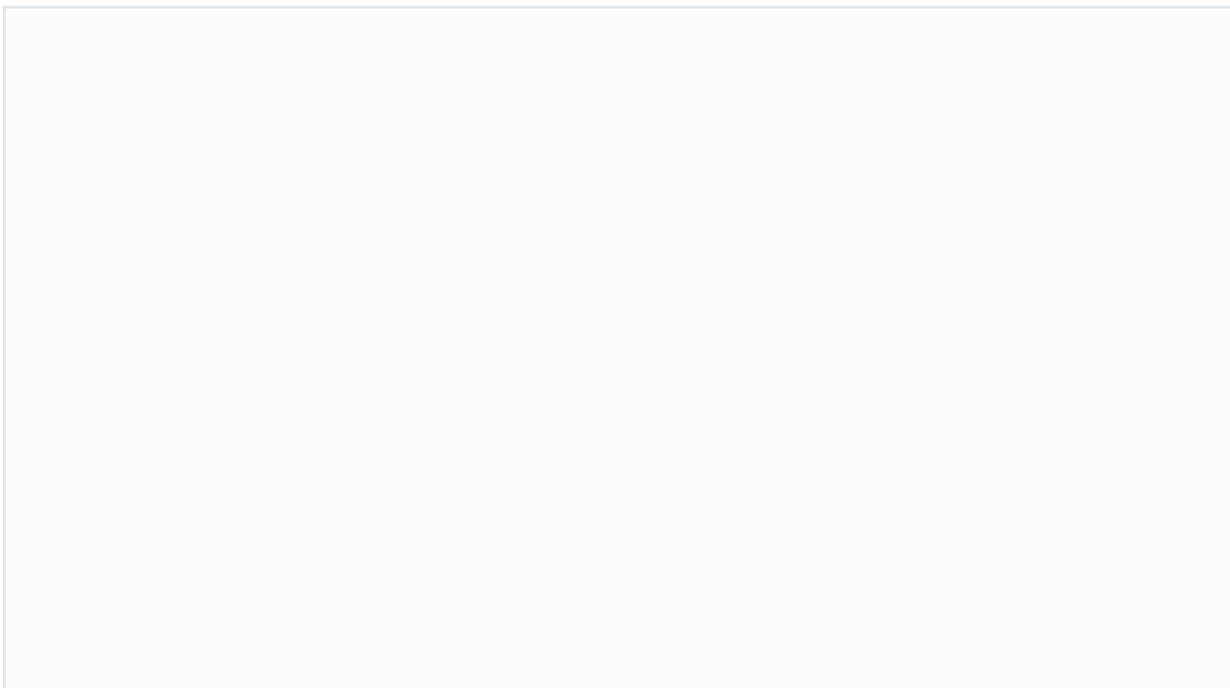
The effect is eye-catching, upbeat and optimistic. It's a refreshing improvement over the status quo ante.

Chris Ronayne, director of **University Circle, Inc.**, described the location as a formerly "hopeless piece of land," used by UCI as a parking lot.

The site was particularly difficult because the Euclid Avenue frontage angles southeast toward the elevated railroad line just to the east of the new apartments.

Ron Lloyd, the RDL architect who led the project with colleagues Paul Glowacki and Marko Lukowsky, designed the first row of townhouses with dramatic sawtooth facades facing the street.

This adds dynamism to the design and makes a virtue of the diagonal street frontage.



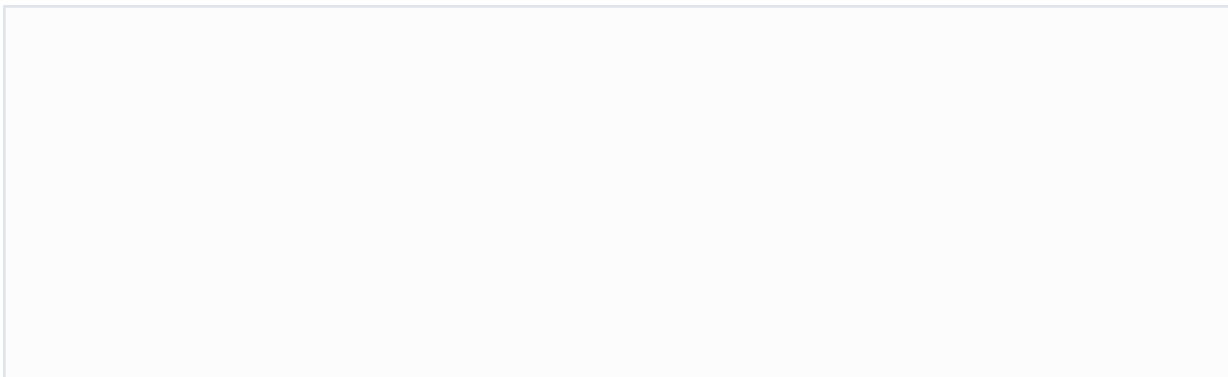


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An upstairs bedroom at Circle 118 has a direct view of the rail tracks that bridge Euclid Avenue east of East 118th Street. Trains make little noise when the windows are closed.

Double-pane windows in the living rooms and second floor bedrooms of the townhouses admit tons of light but very little sound. When viewed from inside, trains and Health Line buses on Euclid Avenue appear to pass in near silence. The effect is striking.

The two- and three-bedroom units, ranging from 1,730 to 1,820 square feet, start at \$327,900. Ultimately, Wymer plans to build a total of 17; future units will start at \$299,000. Two are sold so far.





WXZ
Development

The living room in the sales unit at the Circle 118 development features a sleek, contemporary interior.

Lloyd and his partners have packed a lot into the relatively modest interiors, which feel spacious and airy. Living rooms, which use angled walls to enhance a sense of illusion of roominess, are flooded with natural light.

The sales unit, full of contemporary furniture, is sleek and chic. Rooftop terraces can be augmented as green roofs, for an additional cost starting at \$2,500. The views from up top are striking.

For passersby, however, it's the geometry and palette of the buildings that draw the eye. In addition to the red-and-blue color scheme along Euclid, the sawtooth rear facades of the townhouses are painted in bright shades of yellow, green and orange.

David Swindell, president of WXZ Construction, called the very un-Cleveland color scheme "a vitamin D color palette.

"The whole idea was to be fresh and contemporary," he said.

In future phases, WXZ will add nine more townhouses, which will enclose an interior court off East 118th Street with access to interior garages at ground level.

For now, even in its incomplete state, the Circle 118 project has made a significant contribution. At the tail end of a brutal recession, it's sending a signal that WXZ – and its

lender, KeyBank, is confident in the future of University Circle.

That's the kind of good news anyone can sense while driving by.



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The "Vitamin D" palette for the rear facades of the Circle 118 townhouses features sunny shades of yellow, green and orange, calculated to contrast with the normal grays of a Cleveland winter.

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