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ON A BRIGHTON HILLTOP, A NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH HUNDREDS OF UNITS—AND GOOD FENG SHUI

The Davis Companies' 1515 Commonwealth Ave. will accept renters this summer and sell its first condos in the fall.

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*The developer added green buffer spaces between the two new buildings and the busy road.
Design Distill*

Atop one of Boston's highest points, a complex with 102 condos and about 150 apartments is being built on the site of a former granite quarry and hospital.

And it's being built to have good feng shui.

In keeping with feng shui, developers need to clear the energy out of this type of environment, one that harbored sickness and heavy machinery that damaged the land, said the **development's** feng shui consultant, **Alex Stark**.

"Feng shui has techniques that are very specific to clear that out, to neutralize any of those negative impacts," Stark said, "and then to reprogram the site for vitality, dynamic success, and so on."

This development at 1515 Commonwealth Ave. — which will accept renters this summer and sell its first condos in the fall — was the **first that The Davis Companies created** with feng shui in mind, said Sloan Elsesser, the company’s senior project manager for development.

The condo building, called **1515 Comm Ave**, will include units from studios up to three-bedroom spaces, as well as two private roof decks and a putting green, Elsesser said. **Hew**, the adjacent seven-story apartment building, will also have a roof deck, he said.

Davis added green buffer spaces between the development and the busy road, Stark said, installed convex mirrors to repel the energy coming toward the units from the Green Line and dead-end roads, and buried mineral quartz crystals in its concrete slabs, he said.

“It’s almost ... like an energetic fence all-around,” Stark said, “and that allows us to start to manipulate the energy within that perimeter and make it more strong, more suitable for the purposes of this development.”



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More on feng shui

Feng shui is about being in the right place with the right alignment at the right time, said **Will LeStrange**, a feng shui consultant not associated with the Brighton development.

The practice became popular in the United States during the late '70s and early '80s at the time of the New Age Movement, when people weren't going to church as much as they used to and the practice allowed them to feel aligned with spirituality, LeStrange said.

The Chinese model of feng shui, which has been most enduring, LeStrange said, is the practice of capturing “qi,” a mysterious life force, from natural environments and bringing it into the home. It’s helpful to think of qi as affection, LeStrange said.

“How do we assemble a feeling of affection in the built environment just the same way as we feel affection when we walk in the mountains or we walk in the forest or we walk next to the ocean, we have something that affects us, and it’s a feeling of warmth or love and connectedness to the environment?” LeStrange asked.

Through prioritizing feng shui, people arrange a space to have a good flow and meet “the complex needs of the human psyche,” LeStrange said.

“When you walk into a building that has a strong ... feeling of affection, you feel like you belong there — that you feel connected,” he said. “There’s something about the space where you feel relaxed and at ease.”



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Back in Brighton

The Davis Companies development sits on a site with a shallow curve that resembles an armchair with two armrests, Stark said.

“We consider that ideal for development, because it holds energy the same way that a bowl would hold your coffee,” Stark said.

Elsesser said the hill where the development sits marks the Boston’s highest point. The development’s arms extend toward the south, which he said floods the units with natural light. It also incorporates nature, he said, as the developer created a public space at the front of the site with large trees.

The green spaces help protect the development, Stark said, and dampen the sounds of road traffic.

“In large-scale housing development in particular,” Stark said, “it’s really important to create what in feng shui we call “containment,” places where energy can settle, where you feel secure, protected.”

By using feng shui consultants, Stark said, developers take a nuanced approach to sustainable construction and natural conservation.

“Feng shui consultants, our primary job, even though we’re getting paid by the client, right, our primary job is to protect the environment,” Stark said. “That means the land, which is why we spend a lot of time talking about land. It means the community and the stakeholders at large.”

Davis said the construction company, **TOCCI**, was a bit surprised when it was asked to put crystals in the development’s concrete slabs. “They took it on, and they’ve been a great partner on the project,” he said.

The site, he said, is stunning, as tenants can see across from Everett down the banks of the Charles.

“Even from the second floor of the condo building, you get full panoramic views of downtown Boston,” Elsesser said.