

Mill Pond Commons in Simsbury

Modern Living in a Village Setting

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Along West Street in Simsbury lies a historic 1680 mill. It has undergone many transformations over the years, from processing grain and lumber for the townspeople of Simsbury to spinning hemp used in safety fuses made by the renowned Ensign-Bickford Company. In its newest incarnation, the mill will serve as the heart of a mixed-use development surrounding the luxury apartments at Mill Commons.

The entrance to Mill Commons apartments is framed by two beautiful ponds. One backs the mill with its waterfall leading to Hop Brook. The other is home to the Pond House which features a host of amenities for Mill Commons residents. The observation deck and grill offer an idyllic view of the pond and grounds. Inside, there is a cozy fireplace, wireless internet, television, state-of-the-art sound system and an exercise room with new equipment. Parties and planned wine socials take place in the Pond House gathering room.

Strolling around the grounds at Mill Commons is like taking a walk in a park. Towering evergreen and deciduous trees surround lush lawns spotted with ornamental trees and shrubs. The Village Green is perfect for hanging out with neighbors - a patio area can be used for grilling and the lawn is large enough to host a game of Frisbee. A walking trail leads to the mill pond and waterfall, crossing a covered footbridge at Hop Brook that leads to the mill itself which is now a complex housing offices and Millwrights Restaurant and Tavern where acclaimed chef Tyler Anderson and his crew delight visitors with five-star meals.

From the grist mill, the center of Simsbury is a short walk away. The Drake Hill Mall and the Simsbury Public Library are some of the first things you encounter. A little further on is Drake Hill Park which borders the Farmington River, famous for tubing excursions. There are tennis courts

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and a swimming pool nearby. Then, there is the Performing Arts Center at Simsbury Meadows, the summer home of the Hartford Symphony. This striking outdoor venue is a popular destination for entertainment and events.

The Town of Simsbury has a wonderful blend of rustic and urban sensibilities. The shops reflect what you might find in West Hartford while Ensign Memorial Forest and Belden Forest allow you to escape civilization. This is a town where you can golf at Hopmeadow Country Club, take a

hot air balloon ride over the Farmington Valley, or enjoy a hot roast beef wrap with a cup of Sumatra coffee in Peaberry's Café.

According to Chris Nelson, president of Nelson Construction, Simsbury town officials were very pleased to work with him and his development partner, Ron Janeczko, in getting the Mill Commons project underway. "Simsbury has been great in helping us incorporate this vision," says Nelson. "The town was very progressive in allowing us to create this community."

The mixed-use development seamlessly blends historic detailing with modern construction. "What a unique place this will be, juxtaposing the modern and the old; it's unlike anything else," says Jeffrey Ferony, executive vice president of Trio Properties, the property management firm for Mill Commons.

Renovations to the mill complex are being made in tandem with construction of Mill Commons apartments. Plans call for excavating the Simsbury brownstone ledge in front of the mill to create more convenient parking spaces. The brownstone will be used as veneer on the first floor of the apartment buildings and around the mail center.

"This is the same stone found on the town hall and some churches in Simsbury," says Nelson. Not only does the brownstone help blend the buildings with the town, it helps to make the buildings look more like landmark architecture than apartments, says Nelson. The brick walks also resemble what is found in other parts of Simsbury.

Work at Mill Commons is proceeding rapidly. The 70 to 80 workers on the site are the largest crew Nelson Construction has had on a project. "Six months ago, we started building roads," says Nelson. "We're going for a February first occupancy." October of this year is the targeted completion date for the entire project. When

complete, Mill Commons will have 84 apartments in six buildings with 14 units each and four stand-alone, single-unit gatehouses.

The soundproof qualities of the units are impressive. "Even with the construction going on, it's quiet inside," says Sara Reyes Bickells, senior property manager for Trio Property Management. A special Gyp-Crete gypsum coating is layered underneath floors to provide soundproofing and fire control. Building layouts are designed to provide additional privacy. "There are three apartments on each wing," Bickells says. "That's good for privacy." Stairwells have been modified as well. "Stairs are not connected to apartment walls, so people in the units won't hear people in the stairway," explains Nelson.

Nelson recently completed the upscale Somersby community in Farmington and has introduced some of that workmanship into the Mill Commons apartments. "They're taking a lot of detail from million-dollar homes in Farmington," says Feron. "You don't see that quality in apartments. There are not a lot of Class A rental properties in this area. This fills the niche nicely"

Stainless steel appliances and granite countertops are found in every apartment. Some apartments boast transom windows, raised ceilings, or natural gas fireplaces. Each unit has a private patio or balcony, while the first-floor units have tiled private entrances and direct access to the garage. "That's the beauty of being the first rent-

als," explains Bickells, "you get the most options."

Nelson is also a certified Green Professional and Energy Star builder. "We're doing it right," he says about energy efficiency. "Tenants will use half the energy for heat, cooling and electric as a code-built new apartment." The homes have an Energy Star 3.0 rating thanks to special insulation, a hydro-air heating system, central air conditioning and a tankless hot water heater. Even the full-sized, front-loading washer and dryer in every residence are energy efficient.

All residents have a private garage and elevator access. Entry into the buildings is key-fob controlled. Units range between 927 and 1,781 square feet. Apartments come in eight different floor plans: The Arden and The Bickford have one bedroom, one bath and a den; The Curtis, The Drake, and The Griffin have two bedrooms, two baths; and The Ensign and The Fuller have two bedrooms, two baths and a den. The stand-alone, single-unit gatehouses have two layouts: The Hayes has one bedroom, one-and-a-half baths and a loft; The Inwood has two bedrooms, two baths, a studio and a loft.

Mill Commons in Simsbury will be holding open houses on Saturday, Jan. 12 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Sunday, Jan. 13 from noon to 4 p.m. For more information, visit millcommons.com or call Sara Reyes Bickells at 860-651-4100.

Builder: Nelson Construction

Price: \$1,510 to \$2,650 per month

Style: Contemporary

Rooms: 5 to 7

Bedrooms: 1 to 2

Baths: 1 to 2

Square footage: 927 to 1,781 square feet

Acreage: 7 acres total

Best feature: Luxury rental property

Contact: Sara Reyes Bickell, Mill Commons, 860-651-4100