



BELLEVUE 41ST

workingman's green

YS Development's new residences offer energy-efficient living for the everyday homebuyer—not just the super-rich or the ultra-activist

by Laura Williams-Tracy



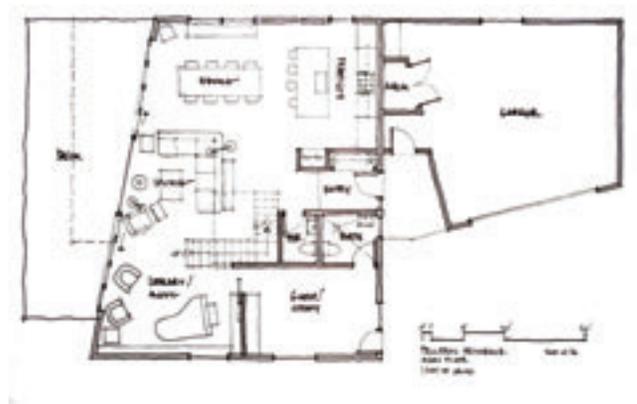
LEFT, ABOVE, OPPOSITE PAGE: The Bellevue 41st homes are designed to match each other aesthetically while still possessing distinctive qualities that provide a sense of identity.

Seattle-area homebuilder Yuval Sofer believes modern, energy-efficient custom homes don't have to be priced out of budget for all but the wealthiest buyers, and he set out to prove himself right with Bellevue 41st, an enclave of five-star Built Green homes in one of the Seattle area's most desirable neighborhoods.

Sofer, a former technology entrepreneur, carved five building sites from an acre-and-a-half tract with stunning western views of downtown Seattle and the Cascade Mountains. And the market responded quickly; four of the lots sold before construction even began, giving buyers the opportunity to be involved in each home's design from the ground level. "We wanted to show that green building isn't just for hippies," Sofer says. "Our goal was to bring high design and quite a high level of sustainability for normal people and to make it a no-brainer."

Priced from \$800,000 to \$1 million and ranging from 2,700 square feet to 3,500 square feet, the homes of Bellevue 41st are contemporary but fit a comfortable family lifestyle. The development plan called for the four homes to share a single driveway, and a challenge of the project was to create single-family home designs that would be at once distinctive from and similar to each other, creating a community with common architectural features while still giving each house its own identity.

"YS Development came to us with a strong sense of design and a commitment to creating a cohesive group of high-quality, efficient, and cost-effective homes," architect Paul Whitney says. "Some of our previous work had resonated with Yuval, so the addition of specific client needs and sensibilities, as well as the particular site conditions of each lot, allowed us to develop an approach to interior space, building form and function, and a set of details that ties the development together while allowing each home to be its own distinct, unique building." Sofer



name
Bellevue 41st

location
Seattle

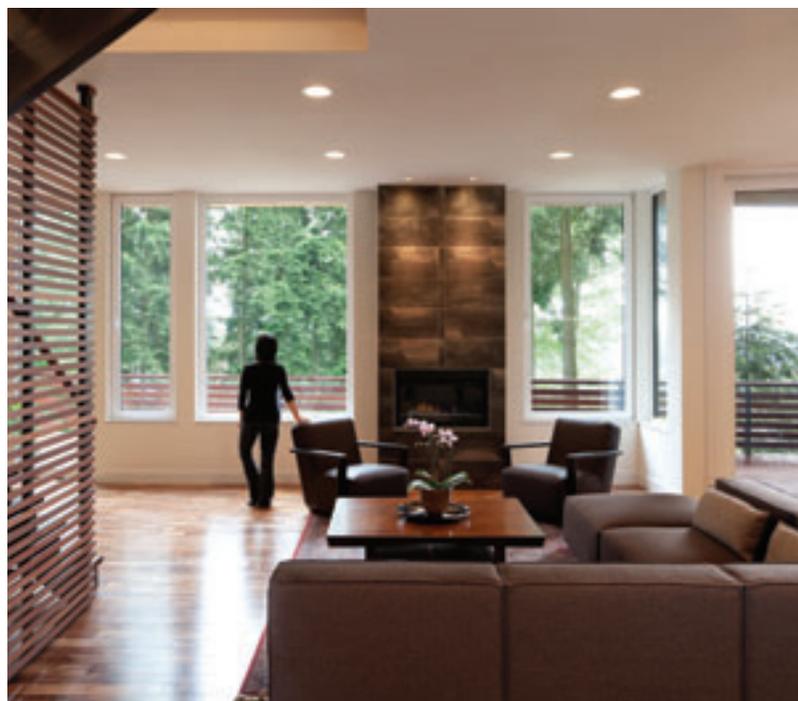
size range
2,500–3,500 square feet

architect
Whitney Architecture

developer
YS Development

green features
Highly insulated windows imported from Austria, a company-developed blend of concrete, and advanced framing techniques

ALL PHOTOS: Lara Swimmer.



“We take high design, make it very practical and low maintenance, and put it in a cost structure so it’s available.”

—Yuval Sofer, Founder

says the homes’ high levels of customization are balanced by the common traits. “Those common details create a special feeling, which is much better than one beautiful stand-alone house,” he says. “The residents have already created a community.”

Sofer launched YS Development in 2007, six years after he moved to Washington and encountered a gap in the local market for modern and energy-efficient homes. Sofer researched sustainable products, building techniques, and the skills of local subcontractors to position his company as an eco-friendly builder, and he applied this knowledge fully to the homes at Bellevue 41st. All four are part of the local building association’s Built Green and Energy Star programs, and everything including insulation, mechanical systems, windows, orientation, and energy monitoring and consumption were considered when designing the homes to be sustainable. “Our goal was to be 50 percent more energy-efficient than building code using passive means,” Sofer says. To meet that goal, Sofer and subcontractors conducted energy modeling during the planning stages, and the homes are prepped

with smart meters to allow continued energy monitoring when the local utility is equipped. The homes also include energy-efficient windows imported from Austria, and they’re packed with twice the level of insulation required by code, creating homes so air-tight they required ventilation, Sofer says.

YS Development devised its own formula of concrete—using 50 percent slag recycled content that would otherwise go into a landfill—to create foundation concrete that’s twice as strong as traditional concrete. “We went through a six-month process to find the right mix and a factory to produce it for us,” Sofer says. “It takes planning and intent, but now by default we use that mix on all of our projects.”

Likewise, YS Development homes employ a distinctive advanced framing technique that is stronger than traditional framing but uses less wood by aligning the studs on the first and second floors. “Although it sounds reasonable, it’s not the norm,” Sofer says. But Sofer says most energy loss comes through the wood of a home, which isn’t insulated. A framing technique that makes a stronger house and creates more surface area that can be insulated makes a more efficient house. “We take high design, make it very practical and low maintenance, and put it in a cost structure so it’s available,” Sofer says. “We are inviting people to see they can have a beautiful, modern home at a reasonable price point, and we’ll get you there, and it’s a lot of fun. Our clients become super-engaged.” **gb&d**

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Creating high quality modern-sustainable homes at affordable prices.

YS Development is a pioneer of modern-sustainable housing. We develop and build beautiful, innovative and thoughtful homes in the Seattle area, designed by the top local architects and designers, and meet the highest sustainable standards.

YS Development
Modern Sustainable Design

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