

LUXURY HOME

quarterly



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INTIMATE STUDY

Located in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood, this study is located in a custom home that was designed and built by LG Development Group.



LG Development Group

CHICAGO-BASED DESIGN-BUILD FIRM SPECIALIZES IN HIGH-END, GREEN HOMES

by David Hudnall

Interest in a more sustainable, energy-efficient home is growing among custom-home owners and buyers, and firms capable of supplying this emerging demand are thriving. “Typically, the more you spend, the better and more efficient the system will be, and in the luxury market, more and more people are liking the savings they get from these systems and features,” says Brian Goldberg, cofounder of Chicago-area firm LG Development Group.

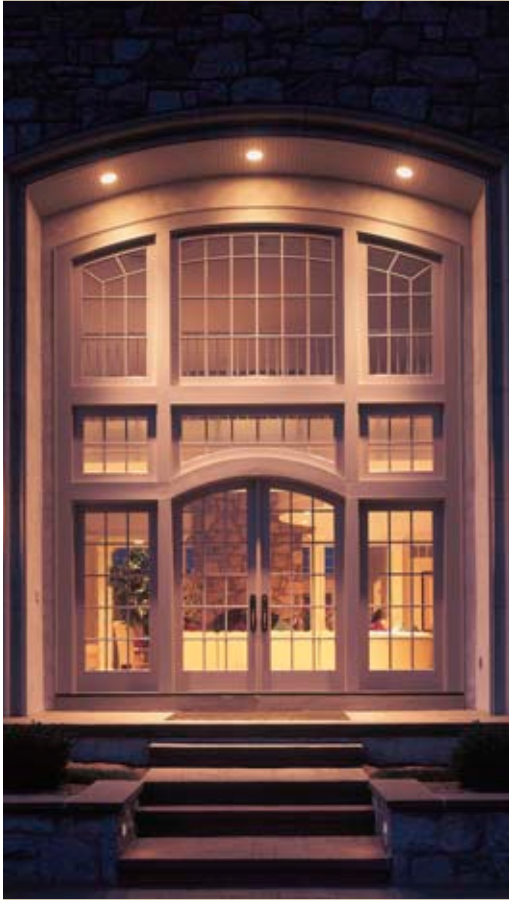
Along with Marc Lifshin, Goldberg founded LG Development in 2005; Goldberg had an engineering background, and Lifshin had development experience. They cut their teeth as a general contractor on homes in upwardly mobile Chicago neighborhoods (Lincoln Park, Gold Coast, and Bucktown), but over time the firm evolved into a design-build construction and development company specializing in the high-end custom-home market. “We’re building houses that last,” says Barry Howard, a partner at LG. “It’s how people used to build homes. Nowadays you hear all the time about somebody who bought a house and three years later it’s falling apart. We’re about durable, lasting homes, and that goes right along with our interest in sustainability and energy efficiency.”

The firm’s capabilities include construction management (design/layout, selection of materials/finishes), workflow management (comprehensive proprietary project management and financial tools), and resource management (coordinating a network of trades, architects, designers, and suppliers). For maximum project control, LG keeps an in-house crew for specific areas. Approximately 80 percent of LG’s work is single-family-home renovations—that can mean 4,000-square-foot condos or 120-year-old homes, both of which the company has worked on lately. “We like to mix traditional with modern,” Howard says.

When clients want green features, the firm coordinates the tax benefits, as well as the science and technology—something Goldberg says homeowners particularly appreciate. “Some of these features, like geothermal, you can get 30 percent off through rebates, and they’re relatively straightforward to install,” he says. “And with smart systems, you can control everything through electronic integration, and they can all complement each other.” The firm also recently hired a building scientist to help it improve its design and to incorporate increased efficiency within, and many of LG Development’s favorite luxury items and amenities are either energy efficient, healthy, or sustainable: solar panels, geothermal systems, bio-foam insulation, and low-VOC panes. “We started doing these green features thinking more from the energy-efficiency side of things,” Goldberg says, “but over time, we’ve found that homeowners really appreciate the low-toxicity stuff, because it’s safer for their kids.” Howard adds, “As these technologies continue to improve, the time for the return on investment is getting shorter and shorter. But it still takes an adventurous client.”

Though LG Development mostly focuses on single-family homes, it is steadily diversifying. A recent student-housing project at Arizona State University, 922 Apache, had the firm working on a ten-story mid-rise with 132 units—35,000 square feet of open space and amenities. The campuses of ASU are expected to see growth toward 90,000 total students by the year 2020, creating sustainable demand for high-end housing. LG Development’s housing structure included:

- energy-efficient, natural-gas-powered central hot water and water-based air-conditioning systems;
- European-style kitchens with modern cabinetry, granite countertops, and stainless-steel appliances;
- large showers with floor-to-ceiling, all-natural



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“Really, what we like are the special projects where you get to be creative. Cookie-cutter is not for us.” BRIAN GOLDBERG, COFOUNDER

stone tile, and a rain-head shower with frameless-glass enclosure;
 • exposed-concrete ceilings with spiral ductwork.

LG is also at work on a high-end restaurant from the Boka Group, which will be helmed by Top Chef winner Stephanie Izard. “It’s an old warehouse space, 4,500 square feet including the restaurant and the kitchen, will custom millwork, beautiful tiling,” Goldberg says. “We’ve done

smaller commercial spaces before—little pizza places and things like that—but this is our first high-end restaurant, so it’s been very exciting for us.”

Going forward, the focus for LG Development will continue to be high-end projects of varying purposes. “We really enjoyed the student-housing work we’ve done, and I think we’ll continue with that, doing large-scale work in that area,”



Expansive Expertise

LG Development's specialized work can be found across Chicago's diverse span of neighborhoods, as evidenced by this custom Lincoln Park home's spacious kitchen (opposite page) and this custom Bucktown home's spa bathroom (above), showcasing minimalist design that maximizes the use of a small space.

Goldberg says. And the firm will continue specializing in the features that seem likely to define a 21st-century home: energy efficiency, electronic integration, and clean products. "Really, what we like are the special projects where you get to be creative," Goldberg says. "Cookie-cutter is not for us." ■



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