

WELL-MANAGED AND TARGETED

GERRY DONOHUE, SENIOR EDITOR

Tight target marketing coupled with efficient production has helped New Concord Green buck the New England slowdown.

Joe Mastronunzio believes the old ways of running a building business don't always work in today's attached-housing market. With the huge financial commitments needed to build a project and the fierce competition, Mastronunzio, who is president of BROM Builders, Inc., in Norwich, Conn., says builders have to focus more on the business of building. No longer can the builder merely put up the buildings and rely on the market to move them. He has to locate and build for unsatisfied market segments, and eke out the highest profits possible by bringing in the project on time and on budget.

"We're experiencing a change in the approach to residential construction management," says Mastronunzio, whose company builds 60 units annually with a \$9-million volume. "You have to be multifaceted to be successful. You have to find the problems before they happen."

At New Concord Green in Norwich, Mastronunzio's actions speak louder than his words. In the sluggish New England market, New Concord Green is selling quickly, thanks to tightly targeted marketing and a fast and efficient production system that has kept up the sales momentum.

BROM Builders is the construction manager, as well as a member of the development partnership, of the 106-unit condominium project. The community opened in September 1988 and 20 of the 26 units in the first phase have been sold. The 18-unit second phase was scheduled to open in May of this year, and seven units were already under contract by early April.

Mastronunzio credits the torrid sales pace to market research. Because Norwich lies almost exactly halfway between New York City and Boston, it missed out on both cities' rapid growth until recently. Consequently, it is one of the most affordable and active markets in Connecticut.

Amid this building activity, however, Mastronunzio located two ignored niches: the empty-nesters, who were leaving Norwich for the nearby Connecticut coast, and the suddenly growing ranks of young professionals. Although some builders might consider these as separate segments,



Two design touches that cut construction costs were twisting the chimneys 45 degrees, which reduces framing costs, and using prestressed concrete planking for the garage floors, which cuts \$2,000 per unit in fill costs and extends the basements to 52 feet across.