

FOND O' CONDOS

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Manicured lawns and flower beds that beckon would-be buyers to pull their cars up to a home for sale are not the curb appeal typical of condominiums.

Most condos have no yard, which is fine by househunters wanting to avoid yard work.

"Not having to worry about yard work is such a good environment for the busy lifestyle most of us have today," said real estate agent Anne Bryant, who has lived 26 years in The Heritage, an upscale high-rise in downtown Columbia.

Most condos have dozens of units, largely indistinguishable from each other. But they have a different kind of curb appeal, say those who build, sell and live in them.

"Condo queen" Jackie Martin of Landmark Resources said the appeal of condos lies primarily on the inside, not outside. Martin is part of an all-woman, full-time sales force at the Columbia company, earning herself and her colleagues the nickname.

"The better it shows, the fresher it looks, the cleaner it is, the quicker it sells," said Martin, a sales agent for the company that specializes in condos, townhomes and patio homes.

"It really is 'show and tell,' and the ones that look like models - with updated appliances, carpet and paint if they need them - sell first."

Downtown Columbia developer Tom Pioreschi said condos also have an exterior curb appeal.

One of Pioreschi's latest residential development ventures downtown is the 10-unit Capitol Places III Condominiums on Main Street, in the former Silver's five-and-dime store building.

He has restored the three-story building from the old Silver's sign up, aiming to make it look as it did in 1916. Eight of the 10 condos are spoken for, costing \$179,900 to \$295,900 for 1,130 to 1,920 square feet.

"It's not the classic curb appeal when you pull up to a home, but it's just as important to make the front of the building as nice as you can," Pioreschi said.

That is why he put the residents' entrance at the building's rear, focusing on making the lobby and landscaping there as appealing as possible.

Pioreschi said he also plays up downtown living - what is there and what is to come. Cleanliness, safety, beautification - all focal points of the Business Improvement District downtown - along with attracting and promoting business are all selling points, he said.