

## Condos touted as self-sustaining

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Catalyst Communities ended months of speculation, announcing that residents of its 36-unit Aura at Camelback community will be guaranteed a "zero" electric bill for the first five years.

The company plans to break ground in March on the environmentally sustainable project in Phoenix's Camelback Corridor. Each unit will include a 4-kilowatt solar-panel system that is expected to generate enough power on-site to meet residents' needs. Completion is scheduled for mid-2009.

"At the end of the year, if they have paid anything, we will reimburse them," said Chad Gifford, Catalyst founder. "Obviously, we don't expect that to happen."

After months of research, Gifford felt confident each solar-power system would collect enough energy during off-peak usage times that it would rely very little, if at all, on the electrical grid. If the solar systems take in more energy than is used, the electricity will be sold back to Salt River Project.

Participating on the guarantee is Agenera LLC, a Phoenix renewable-energy consulting firm. Agenera helped Gifford decide on the solar platform for the homes while helping pick out other energy-saving technologies, said Mike Eiselle, company president.



Gifford

Gifford is trying to achieve LEED silver standards, a high distinction in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system created by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The condos also will include xeriscape, recycled building products, low-flow shower heads, redundant hot water systems and dual-flush toilets.

Gifford said the homes will cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million. With oil and natural gas prices still on the rise, Gifford said people will be drawn to the community for more than philosophical reasons.

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