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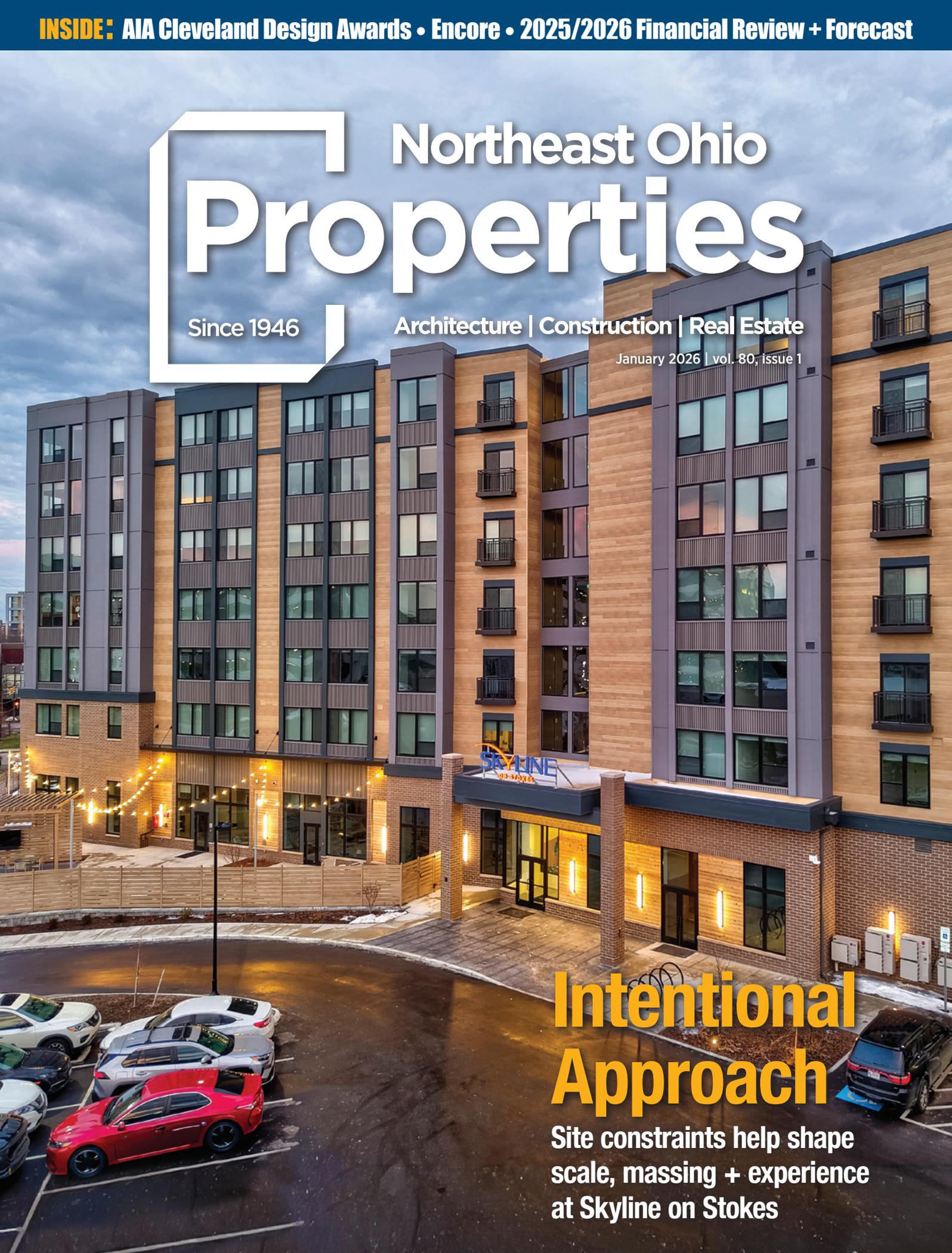
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Intentional Approach

Site constraints help shape
scale, massing + experience
at Skyline on Stokes





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By Scott Esterly | Photos by Doug Bardwell & Scott Esterly

Skyline on Stokes was shaped as much by its site as by its program. Located on a constrained, triangular parcel at the intersection of Stokes Boulevard and Cedar Avenue in Cleveland's University Circle and Fairfax neighborhoods, the project required early clarity around scale, access and how a new residential development could transition into its surroundings. Rather than treating those constraints as limitations, the project team used them to guide decisions about massing, circulation and daily experience, allowing the building to respond to its context without overwhelming it.

Developed by Atlanta-based owner ACRE, Skyline on Stokes was designed by LDA Architects and delivered by Geis Companies through a closely coordinated design-assist collaboration. Geis served as construction manager at risk while also working alongside the LDA team to shape the project's design and execution, a delivery approach that allowed constructability, cost and long-term operations to be considered early and often. Signet Management was selected as the third-party property manager.

"What immediately stood out to me was the scale and intentionality of the project," says Jessica Miller, Signet's

property manager for Skyline on Stokes, recalling her first impressions of the development. "Skyline on Stokes isn't just another apartment community. It was clearly designed as a destination within University Circle."

A site that shapes the project

The development occupies approximately 2.2 acres at 2132 Stokes Blvd. and is bounded by multiple streets, giving it high visibility but limited flexibility. Its irregular geometry demanded early decisions about where the building should assert itself and where it should step back, as well as how vehicles, pedes-

trians and service functions would move through the site.

"The triangular site is unique," says Steve Jennings, architect with LDA. "Approaching from the north and south, one doesn't have the perception of it being a much larger site."

That perception informed one of the project's defining moves. Along Stokes Boulevard, the primary building rises seven stories, establishing a strong urban edge appropriate to the corridor and reinforcing the area's increasingly dense, institutional character. Along Cedar Avenue, the scale steps down into a series of townhome units that align more

Photo courtesy of Signet Real Estate Group LLC



Photo by Doug Barthwell

TAKING SHAPE The project’s triangular, constrained site directly informed decisions about massing, access, circulation and how the building engages surrounding streets.

closely with the surrounding residential fabric. The transition reduces the visual impact of the larger building while creating a more comfortable relationship with adjacent streets and neighboring homes.

The completed development includes 263 residential units in total. The seven-story apartment building contains 255 units, 12 of which are income restricted and designated for households earning up to 80% of area median income, while the townhome component adds eight rental units arranged as two buildings with four units each. In addition to screening parking and service areas from view, they establish a residential edge that softens the project’s perimeter and reinforces a sense of neighborhood continuity. Each townhome includes an attached two-car garage and a small study or office at the garage level, offering a housing option that feels distinct from the main building while remaining closely connected to its amenities.

From drawings to construction

Planning for Skyline on Stokes began several years before construction, with early design work taking shape around 2022. Groundbreaking occurred in December 2023 on a site that had pre-

viously been used primarily for surface parking, with limited existing infrastructure. Early site work progressed smoothly, with minimal remediation required and no significant subsurface surprises, allowing the project to move forward without major disruption.

The building is organized as a five-over-two structure, with two levels of precast concrete deck and podium con-

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Brandon Kline
Geis Companies

struction supporting five stories of wood framing above.

“We essentially designed two separate buildings stacked on top of each other,” Jennings says.

The team utilized a panelized wood framing system, with prefabricated wall sections delivered and installed in tight sequences. That approach allowed the structure to rise quickly on a compact

site. Careful coordination was required at the transition between the podium levels and the wood-framed upper stories, particularly around window placement, exterior detailing and envelope continuity.

Grading and earthwork decisions were also addressed early in the process. Rather than relying on heavy fill or extensive retaining conditions, the team focused on balancing the site to support both the building and its outdoor spaces.

“At the end of the day, it was about three feet in the far corner that we’d dug out,” says Brandon Kline, vice president of design at Geis Companies. “The site was balanced, which was huge. That’s always what you want to do.”

Those grading decisions allowed portions of the outdoor amenity areas to be subtly set above surrounding elevations, creating defined spaces that feel protected without becoming disconnected from the street. In select areas, the grade change is just enough to provide privacy while preserving visual and physical connections to the surrounding sidewalks and neighborhood.

Market volatility remained a constant factor throughout construction. Shifting material costs and evolving regulatory



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Photo by Scott Esterly

INVITING ENTRANCE The main lobby is anchored by a triangular central sofa and fireplace, creating a strong visual focal point and natural gathering space upon entry.

considerations required ongoing evaluation as the project progressed. According to the team, the design-assist project delivery structure allowed decisions to be tested against constructability, sequencing and long-term performance, helping the project navigate uncertainty without sacrificing quality or intent.

Skyline on Stokes reached substantial completion in late July 2025, and the first residents moved in July 31.

“We did such a good job on cost control and cost management on this project, there was actually money and surplus to put back in,” Kline says.

Materials + exterior expression

Material selection at Skyline on Stokes focused on durability, longevity and how the building would be perceived over time within University Circle. The exterior combines brick veneer with metal siding, including wood-tone metal panels used to introduce warmth and texture without the maintenance demands of natural wood.

The material palette reinforces the project’s massing strategy. Brick grounds the building visually at the street level, while lighter metal elements help articulate upper floors and accentuate setbacks. The exterior expression is consistent across elevations, allowing the building to read as a cohesive whole despite its varied massing.

Oversized windows are distributed regularly across the façade, bringing daylight deep into units while reinforcing a consistent exterior rhythm. At ground level, glazing helps activate common areas and provides transparency into shared spaces, offering glimpses of activity without turning the building into a display.

Amenities organized for daily use

Amenities at Skyline on Stokes were planned as part of the building’s daily infrastructure rather than as secondary features. Shared spaces are concentrated on the first floor, creating a clear and accessible hub that residents pass through as part of their regular routines.

“The coworking spaces, conference rooms and library cater perfectly to residents who work hybrid or remote schedules,” Miller says.

The first-floor experience begins with a main lobby organized around a large triangular central sofa and fireplace, establishing a visible gathering point that anchors the building’s common areas. Adjacent spaces flow into one another, allowing residents to move easily between social, work and fitness functions without needing to navigate multiple floors.

The coworking space was designed as a true work hub rather than a small business center. The open coworking



Photo by Scott Estely

WORK + RELAXATION The expansive coworking space was designed as a true work hub, offering flexible seating, abundant daylight and adjacent reservable conference rooms.

area measures nearly 2,000 square feet and is paired with four conference rooms that can be reserved as needed. Within the main space, residents find a range of work settings, including individual workstations, shared tables, soft seating for longer sessions and a large communal meeting table. Large windows bring daylight deep into the room, while wood ceiling accents, integrated lighting and a neutral material palette help define zones without breaking the openness of the space. Power and connectivity are distributed throughout, allowing the room to function comfortably across different work styles and schedules.

The library is positioned alongside the coworking area as a quieter place to read, work or step away from the more active shared spaces. Built-in wood shelving lines the room, creating a simple backdrop for books and small seating areas. Along two walls, individual study desks with task lighting provide focused work spots, while a small lounge area supports more casual use.

“I see residents throughout these spaces,” Kline says. “The library gets used a ton, and the co-working and conference rooms get booked up a lot.”

The game room and social lounge provides a more casual setting for

informal gatherings. The space is anchored by a dramatic book-matched stone feature wall, paired with slim brass wall sconces that add warmth. A long surface bar with a quartz countertop and wood slat base runs the length of the space.

Flooring throughout the room is ceramic tile. Overhead, the ceiling is painted a deep green tone, creating contrast against the lighter walls. The space is rounded out with a ping-pong table, pool table, coffee machine, television and ample seating.

Fitness amenities include a 24-hour full-body gym with free weights, cardio



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Photo courtesy of Signet Real Estate Group, LLC

GETTING TOGETHER The game room and social lounge provides a casual setting for resident interaction, featuring durable finishes, layered lighting and flexible seating arrangements.

machines, punching bag and a dedicated yoga and spin space. Additional support spaces include a community mail and package room, a pet washing station and a bike storage room, plus a TULU Smart Rental Store, which provides residents with on-demand access to household and lifestyle items.

Exterior patio + courtyard

Outside, the building extends that same everyday amenity mindset into a landscaped courtyard and patio environment. The outdoor deck includes a putting green, an outdoor kitchen and grilling area, plus multiple gathering

zones organized around fire pits and covered seating beneath a large pergola.

The patio area also benefits from the way the grade was managed on site, allowing portions of the resident outdoor space to sit slightly above the sidewalk for added privacy without losing its connection to the street.

In the parking lot, nine Xeal electric vehicle charging stations provide a total of 18 dedicated charging spaces. The transit-oriented development includes ample bike parking both outside and inside the building.

The overall site also incorporates two public community park areas,

including landscaping and sculptures, at each end of the main building along Stokes Boulevard.

Support spaces

From the start, Skyline on Stokes was designed to support efficient, predictable daily management. Circulation patterns, service access and back-of-house functions were planned early to reduce friction for both residents and staff, Miller explains.

“From an operational perspective, the building was designed with efficiency in mind,” she notes. “The separation of residential, amenity and operational spaces supports smooth daily operations.”

Trash rooms are located on every residential floor, streamlining service and reducing resident travel. That infrastructure also supports door-to-door trash collection offered five days a week.

Residential planning + unit mix

Residential floors offer a variety of unit types within a compact footprint. The seven-story building along Stokes Boulevard includes studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, as well as loft-style units.



SCALED LIVING From compact loft units with open bedroom-living arrangements (top) to larger two-story residences (middle), Skyline on Stokes uses natural light, efficient planning and contemporary kitchens (bottom) to create a range of comfortable living environments.

The townhomes along Cedar Avenue follow largely consistent layouts, with end units offering slightly larger floor plans. Unit sizes range from approximately 1,170 to 1,355 square feet.

“The project focused on smaller units, but there’s a wide variety, including loft-style spaces and options that feel more like homes than apartments,” Jennings says.

Interior planning emphasized openness and clarity. Large windows and efficient layouts maximize natural light and create a sense of volume,



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Steve Jennings
LDA Architects

even within smaller units. Kitchens feature quartz countertops, tile backsplashes and stainless steel appliances, while wood-style luxury vinyl plank flooring provides durability throughout living spaces.

Many units, particularly studios, are offered fully furnished, providing turnkey living options that include modern furniture and everyday essentials.

“Residents have responded very positively to the option of choosing between two interior color schemes,” Miller says.

Select units in the main building include Juliet-style balconies, and floor plans range from compact studios under 400 square feet to two-bedroom layouts exceeding 1,300 square feet, allowing the building to accommodate a variety of living patterns and life stages.

“Layout clarity was equally important,” Miller says. “The open floor



Photos by Scott Esterly

Photo courtesy of Signet Real Estate Group LLC



Photo courtesy of Signet Real Estate Group LLC



Photo by Scott Esterly



ACTIVE AMENITIES Resident amenities at Skyline on Stokes extend from an outdoor patio with pergola and firepits (top) to a putting green (middle), and a fully equipped fitness center designed for daily use (bottom).

plans maximize space and natural light while still feeling elevated for everyday living.”

Early response + neighborhood fit

Since opening, early indicators suggest the building is performing as intended. According to Miller, feedback from residents has centered on consistency, responsiveness and the overall experience of living in the building.

“Since opening, Skyline on Stokes has maintained a 5.0 Google rating,” she says. “Residents often mention the staff and attention to detail as part of the overall living experience.”

The project’s location within University Circle and Fairfax continues to shape its resident base, attracting professionals and residents whose daily routines are closely tied to nearby institutions and employers.

“Skyline on Stokes attracts professionals, medical and academic affiliates, and residents who value proximity to University Circle,” Miller says.

Modern urban living

As Skyline on Stokes moves beyond its initial opening, the project is beginning to settle into its role within University Circle and Fairfax. The building’s form, unit mix and amenity strategy reflect decisions made early in the process, many of them driven by the site itself and the expectations of a neighborhood defined by institutions, nearby residential streets and daily pedestrian activity.

According to Miller, those early choices continue to shape how the building functions day to day.

“Skyline on Stokes represents more than just a place to live,” Miller says. “It reflects a thoughtful approach to modern urban living.”

That sentiment is echoed by the project team.

“The one word I’d use for the project is intentional,” Kline says. “Everything was intentional and thought out.” **P**