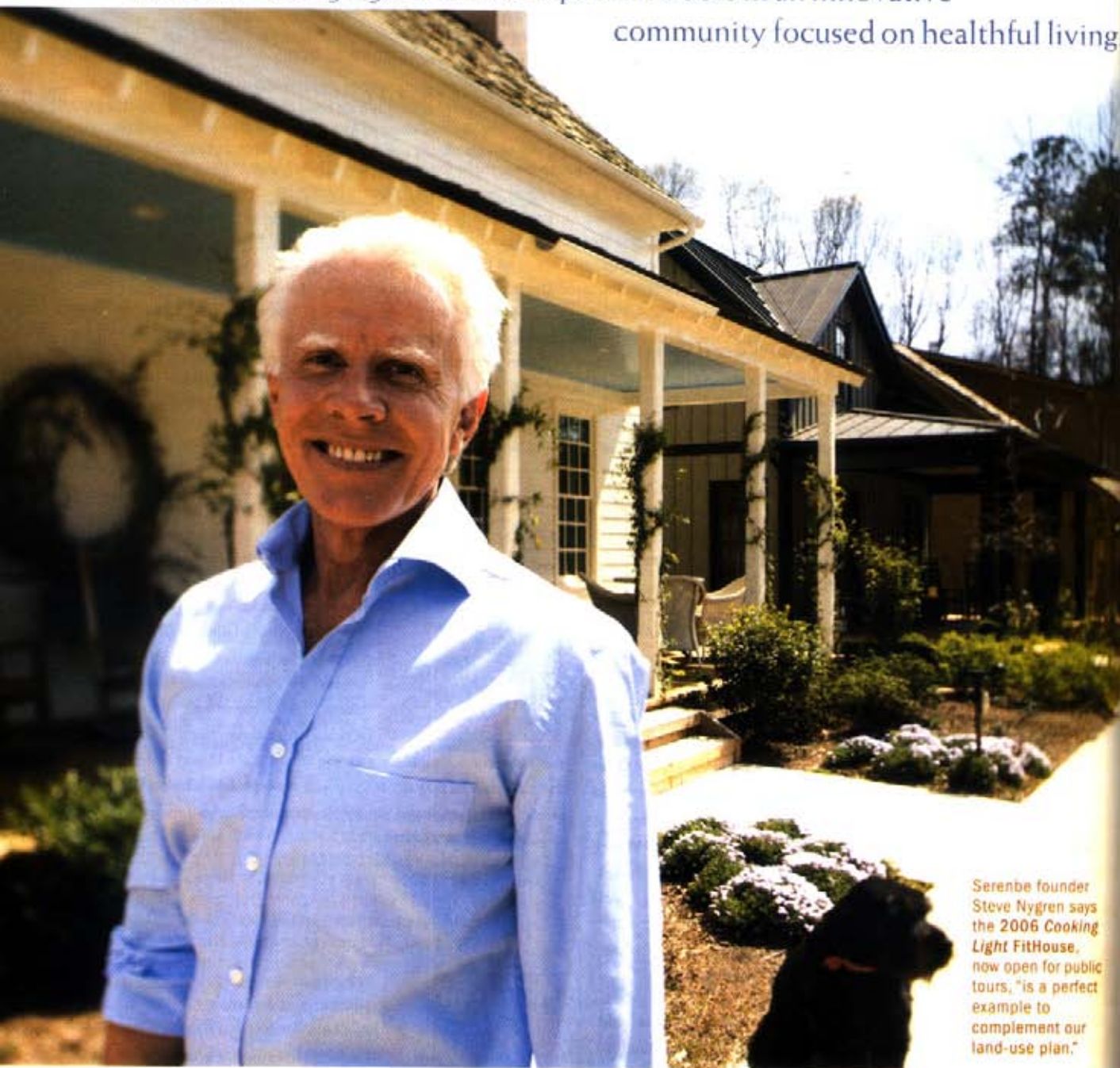


Building in balance

The 2006 *Cooking Light* FitHouse opens its doors in an innovative community focused on healthful living



Serenbe founder Steve Nygren says the 2006 *Cooking Light* FitHouse, now open for public tours, "is a perfect example to complement our land-use plan."

When Steve Nygren, a former restaurateur, and his wife, Marie, bought 60 acres of undeveloped land just south of Atlanta for a family getaway in the early 1990s, they did so because they loved the land. Ten years and another 840 acres later, the pair decided they wanted to create a community that married traditional values and environmental sustainability, something they hadn't been able to find in any neighborhood they had seen or lived in before.

Although they were surrounded by farmland unaffected by the sprawl of nearby Atlanta, Nygren realized, "I didn't have the resources to purchase enough land to truly protect us. So we decided to organize an alliance of landowners in the area to plan development in balance with protected land."

Beginning with informal conversations over coffee with neighbors, Nygren's effort grew to include public forums with government representatives and local citizens that



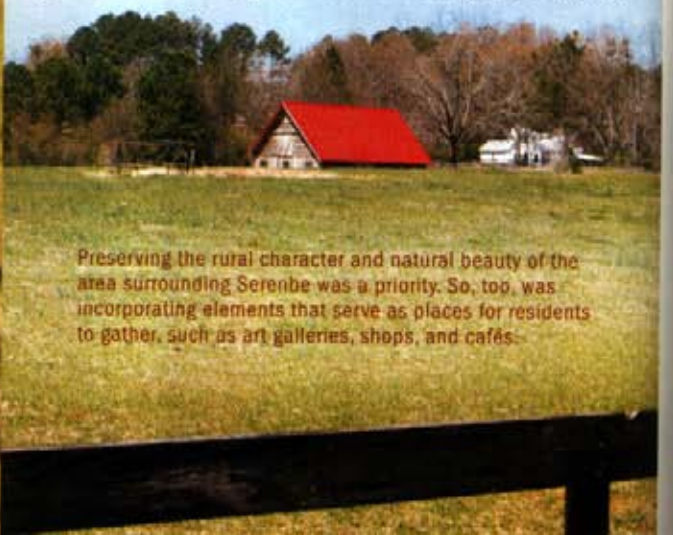
helped shape an innovative land-use plan for 65,000 acres in several adjoining Georgia counties. The plan, which received accolades from the Urban Land Institute, clusters developments in villages on 20 percent of the land, leaving 80 percent as green space.

Today, the community of Serenbe encompasses an organic farm; a 224-acre village with shops, offices, galleries, and space for 220 estate homes, townhouses, and cottages; and amenities such as horse, bike, and walking trails; permanent green space; and a neighborhood amphitheater.



The 2006 *Cooking Light* FitHouse, an estate home in Serenbe, is a model for incorporating comfortable and healthful living ideas in innovative ways. Its 4,836 square feet include four bedrooms, family and exercise rooms, an artist's studio, expansive porches facing natural settings, and a garden courtyard. Architect John Tee, of Atlanta, designed the home to "have a very open floor plan that encourages a relaxed lifestyle. It's a place

The *Cooking Light* FitHouse (above) was built to Earth-Craft House Program standards. Look for in-depth coverage of the completed home in the August issue.

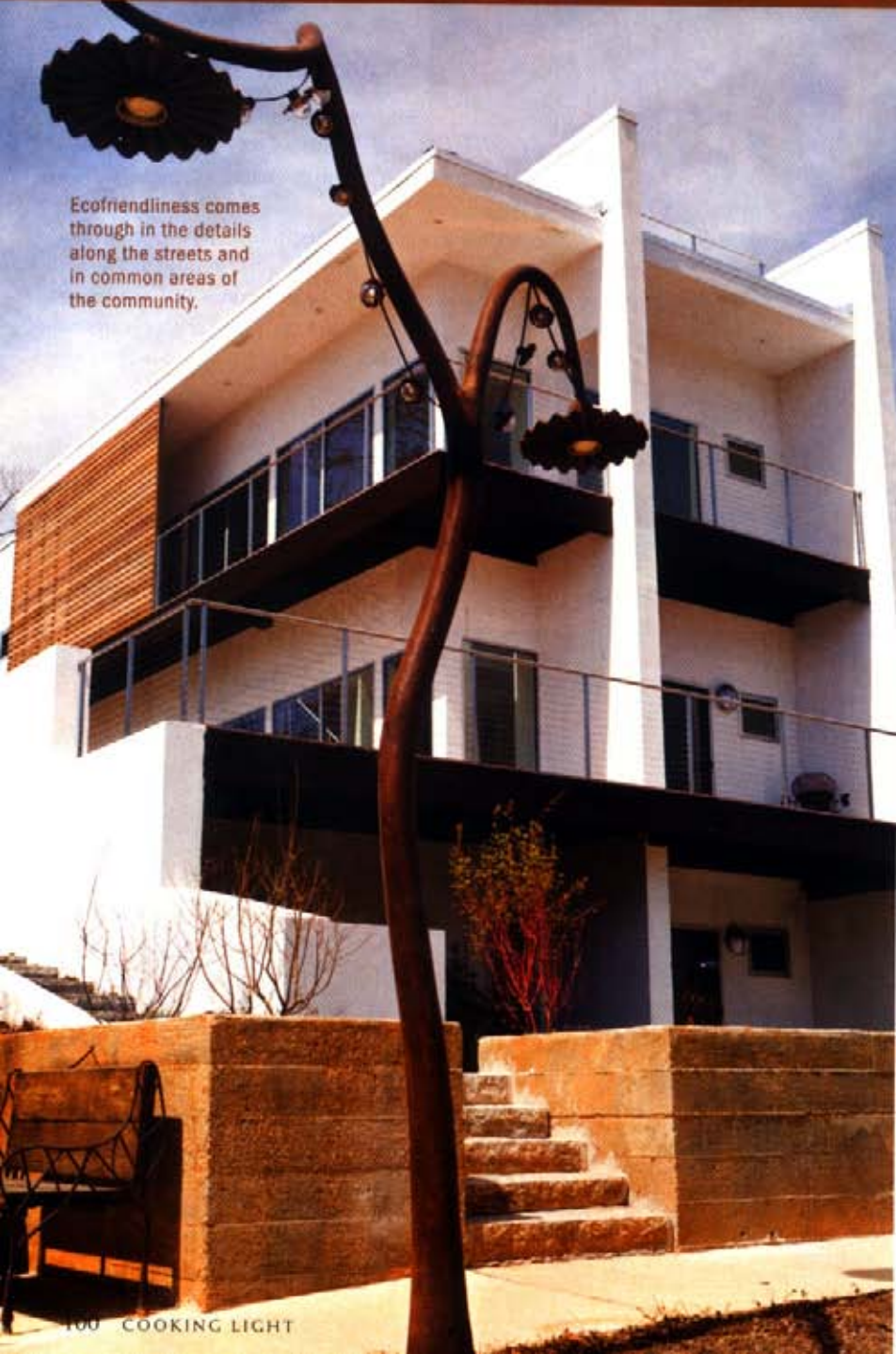


Preserving the rural character and natural beauty of the area surrounding Serenbe was a priority. So, too, was incorporating elements that serve as places for residents to gather, such as art galleries, shops, and cafés.



Throughout Serenbe, there is a blend of aesthetic and function.

Ecofriendliness comes through in the details along the streets and in common areas of the community.



where you feel like you can get in shape, write that book, or paint," he explains. "There are spaces like the studio where you can go to be alone, but yet you're still connected to all that's going on in the house."

In addition, the FitHouse is built to meet the standards of the EarthCraft House Program, which address issues of energy efficiency, maintenance, water conservation, and resource-efficient building materials and systems.

Tee also capitalized on the natural surroundings of the home—in particular, the rear of the property, which abuts walking trails and woods, by integrating plenty of windows and open space that "bring the outdoors in." A large kitchen, adjacent to a two-story great room and rear deck spanning the rear of the house, creates an easy flow for entertaining.

The home is being built by Mac McKinney of McKinney Builders, Inc., and the interior designer is Cheryl Carson Simpson of CCS Interior Design, LLC. "The key was to consider the physical as well as psychological health of the people who will live here," Simpson says. The result is a balance of textures, scale, proportions, and color, plus the use of ecofriendly materials. What she calls a "punch of color" was reserved for spaces where people congregate, while other areas designated for privacy and reflection have a more subdued palette. "The house functions practically for an easy, low-maintenance way of living." ❖

To see the FitHouse and get directions to Serenbe, visit CookingLight.com/features.