

Squamish: An Olympic medal contender for home value and lifestyle

Just an easy highway drive north of Vancouver, nestled between two of Canada's most affluent communities — West Vancouver and Whistler, Squamish has waterfront and mountains written all over it. And it's going to be a lot easier to access when the \$600-million upgrade to the Sea to Sky Highway is completed in time for the 2010 Vancouver-Whistler Olympics.

Squamish is also at the half way mark between the two Olympic centres and each will be a 45-minute drive away from downtown Squamish. More and more people who visit Squamish have decided to make the community their home, leading to six major developments currently underway, with a like number in the planning stage.

"This is an exciting time for Squamish," says Mayor Ian Sutherland. "We have a lot of great developments being built and Squamish is really going to benefit."

For a growing number of lucky people, living in Squamish is a lifestyle choice for those who want it all. This former logging port has really grown up.

So, what's it like to live in Squamish? Just ask the hundreds of new residents joining the 16,000 people who already live there.

They'll tell you about stunning water and mountain views from every window, a vibrant downtown area undergoing a revitalization program, a new 32-hectare (80-acre) oceanfront redevelopment that will offer modern condominium living, marina, upscale restaurants and shops.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp (CMHC) reported that Squamish posted the strongest sales increase anywhere in the Lower Mainland, rising 21 per cent in 2007 over the previous year.

"With the overall market entering an era of stabilized prices we continue to see potential value increase in areas like Squamish," says

Jennifer Podmore, managing partner, MPC Intelligence Inc. — a real estate research and analytical firm. "With their relatively low prices and close proximity to both Vancouver and Whistler, Squamish represents a good real estate value."

Whistler, North America's number one ski destination, is just up the highway, as is the proposed Garibaldi at Squamish Resort and ski area, the latter of which would include two new 18-hole championship golf courses. For more information on the Garibaldi development, visit www.garibaldiatsquamish.com.

Some of Squamish's recent popularity can be attributed to the recent opening of the country's first private university, Quest University, which is attracting students from around the globe. In addition, Capilano College was recently designated Capilano University, which has further increased its popularity. With these two universities alone, the rapidly increasing student population in Squamish has created a sound rental accommodation market for projects close to campus.

The population of Squamish is expected to double over the next 20 years, which has led to Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Rona and Save-On-Foods opening new stores, and paved the way for plans for London Drugs and Costco as well.

The number-one-selling new community is also the new centre of Squamish.

Eaglewind by Solterra Group of Companies is a 10-hectare (25-acre) master-planned community nestled in the Squamish downtown area at Pemberton Avenue, 4th Avenue and the Squamish River estuary.

What makes this new community unique is that nearly half of the development consists of a park leading to the estuary waterfront

and features walking trails, play areas for children, tennis and lawn bowling courts, a community garden and an area set aside for a dog park.

Several developments have already been constructed within this new community: Talon, featuring larger townhouses and duplexes with an average price in the mid-\$500,000s; Streams, with townhouses averaging in the high-\$400,000s; and Rockcliff, a 90-suite concrete and steel apartment complex, which quickly sold out.

"It is now clear the positive impact a large development like (Solterra Group's community development) will have on the future of Squamish," says Padmore. "The current offering represents an opportunity to get into a master-planned community with easy access to the estuary, hiking trails and it is within an hour of either Whistler or Vancouver."

The newest development at Eaglewind is aptly named Summits View, for the stunning views as seen from homes in this six-storey concrete and steel complex. The design of the building housing 134 apartments, including city homes and townhomes, and is described as 'mountain contemporary' by the Vancouver-based award-winning Gomeroff Bell Lyon Architects.

Summits View will also be built by Solterra Group, a company that has pioneered a system of prefabricating sections of its concrete and steel buildings to cut down on construction time and lower the cost, and in turn sale prices.

These prices are in line with the much lower value wood frame condominium apartment buildings, while offering the long-term superior quality benefits of steel and concrete construction.

For more information on this exceptional community, visit www.EaglewindLiving.com.