

# SECOND HOMES

■ Sicamous for all seasons / F3  
 ■ Puzzles F7

■ RECREATION AND INVESTMENT PROPERTIES ■

EDITOR: JANET Vlieg, (780) 498-5687; jvlieg@thejournal.canwest.com

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An artist's rendering of Summits View apartment and townhouse complex



Old wharf pilings recall the Squamish area's industrial roots.

## Surrounded by wild wonders

Summits View a window on Squamish's wilderness playground

ALISON APPELBE  
 Special to The Journal  
 SQUAMISH, B.C.

It's an exotic setting — where Howe Sound meets the Squamish River and its estuaries.

To the northeast, the granite monolith called Stawamus Chief, popular with rock climbers, shows its challenging face. To the north, Black Tusk rises in the distance.

And on this August day, at the end of a strip of land extending well into the inlet, called the Spit, kite-boarders await predictably strong winds. But the only other signs of human intrusion here are the derelict wharf pilings that recall the area's industrial past.

Squamish may look wild and unkempt from its outer edges, but this community — a year-round hub for outdoor recreation halfway between Vancouver and Whistler — is a happening place. Over the next 20 years, its population of 16,000 is expected to double.

One of half a dozen new developments is Eaglewind, a 10-hectare (25-acre) master-planned

community between the town centre and Squamish River estuary.

Solterra Developments has worked with the District of Squamish to incorporate B.C.-made Smart Growth principles, and support efforts to make the community more demographically inclusive and less car dependent. Social and recreational amenities, and some retail and services, will be included in Eaglewind's four sub-developments — Talon, Rockcliff, Streams and Summits View.

"We've done our best to cater to everyone, from the youngest — with the children's play area — to the district-run seniors' centre, where older members of the community can get together," says Mike Bosa, Solterra development manager.

Importantly, Solterra began by ceding almost half its site back to the district as a public park, and trails run from the residential areas through deciduous woodlands to the unpopulated estuary.

The public park — "11 acres of good stuff," says Solterra marketing manager Jennifer Steffens — includes several play areas, tennis and lawn bowling courts, and community gardens, even a dedicated "dog run."

The latest offering, Summits View, is a mid-rise apartment and townhouse complex. The earlier Eaglewind phases are Talon — townhouses of which a handful remain from \$559,900; Streams — also townhomes, listed from \$449,000; and Rockcliff, a 90-unit concrete-and-steel apartment complex that sold out.

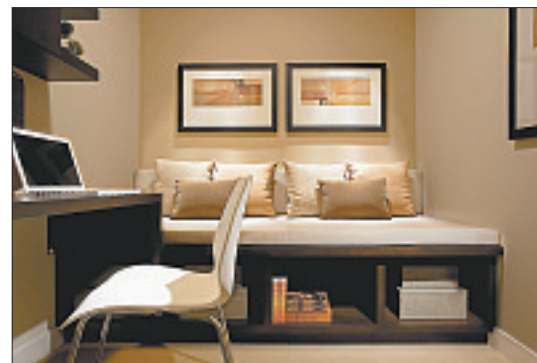
Summits View will have the same pioneering construction, including prefabricated exterior walls, but in this case in a six-storey complex of 134 apartments, including city-homes and townhomes.

The exterior design, by Vancouver-based Gomeroff Bell Lyon Architects, is described as "mountain contemporary."

Details include a varying roofline with shed-roof



All the units have huge windows to take advantage of natural light and offer breathtaking views.



All units are wired for high-speed Internet.



Natural-gas fireplace adds atmosphere to dining area.



Generous-sized balconies are standard.

features, brick accents and the use of timber in the main lobby and townhome entries.

All the units have oversized windows to maximize natural light and the views. Indeed, the views — of the Stawamus Chief, Garibaldi or Tantalus mountain ranges, or the low-lying river, marshlands and Howe Sound — are a central feature.

A courtyard will feature raised footpaths and landscaping. Covered secured parking is mostly at ground level. In the townhomes, there's direct access to parking. Large storage areas are underground (in a district that's technically a tidal plain).

Summits View will also have a media and games room, guest suite and meeting room, ski waxing and bike tune-up area and dog-wash station. Next to the complex will be a public square and some shops. The town centre is within easy walking distance.

Suites range in size from a one-bedroom of 576 square feet through a one-bedroom with den of 670 square feet ("our most popular unit," says Steffens), to two-bedrooms, some with a den, as large as 1,513

square feet. In the two-bedroom units, the bedrooms are on opposite sides to ensure privacy.

In townhomes of roughly 1,500 square feet (with an additional multi-purpose room below ground), the living area can be on the main level or the upper level to take maximum advantage of views.

See SUMMIT / F2



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# Landlords turn savvy decorators

Vacation rental glut means decor matters again

SAMANTHA STOREY  
New York Times

Rental inventory of vacation homes is rising in the United States. With the economic downturn, owners are opting to delay selling their properties and instead supplement their income by renting them out.

In addition, some travellers are forgoing hotels and choosing vacation-home rentals as a more economical alternative. Vacation-home classified ads as a result are becoming more creative. Owners and investors, eager to stand out in an increasingly crowded market, are hoping that they can trump the usual real estate maxim — location, location, location — with their own combination of decor, style and historical accuracy.

Christine Karpinski, the author of *How to Rent Vacation Properties* by Owner (Kinney Pollack Press, 2004), said design has become more important since more rentals have become available.

Ten years ago, a mountain cabin could be decorated with utilitarian log furniture, and “it would rent anyways because there was less to choose from,” she said. “But now there are so many more choices, and travelers will gravitate to what appeals to them.”

People in the design industry say that the influence of designers like Martha Stewart has helped lead the consumer to be much more conscious of furniture and esthetics.

“In the context of the way people look at their homes,” said Warren Shoulberg, editor of *Home Furnishings News*, “consumers are more design savvy than they ever were because they have been exposed to all these products.”

Real estate agents agree and say vacation renters are seeking such flourishes in the properties they rent. The trend could have been predicted a few years ago, when vacation-home owners began offering luxury amenities like 600-

thread-count sheets, Bosch appliances and radiant-heated tiles. Those are now standard in most high-end rentals.

But with so many vacation getaways entering the rental market, owners and property management companies are now looking to design to draw vacationers.

Real estate land developer Robbie Bell knew he needed something special to persuade renters to choose his 1871 home in the heart of Savannah’s historic district. He bought the 10-bedroom property on Liberty Street in 2004, even though it was boarded up and dilapidated.

The \$1-million gut renovation took more than two years, and when it came time to do up the interior, he spent close to another \$250,000 on furnishings and decorations. The property rents for \$8,925 a week.

“We tried to set up the house in the way it would have been in the 19th century,” Bell said. “Most people doing this have an old house and put old furniture in there and find what they can on sale. We really wanted to make it stand out.”

There was plenty of competition. The number of vacation homes in Savannah listed on HomeAway.com, a vacation rentals website, increased 120 per cent in the first two quarters of 2008 from the similar period last year, said Eileen Buesing, the site’s director of public relations.

Since October 2006, when guests first began to stay at Bell’s house, the listing on VRBO.com, the website where he advertises, has received 29 positive-rated online guest book comments and no negative comments.

Several guests cited “the exquisite interiors” and “elegant decor” as part of the reason for their positive stay. (Most listings on VRBO, owned by HomeAway, average only five online guest-book comments, Buesing said.)

Seattle architect Doug McKenzie has



NEW YORK TIMES

A well-appointed rental home in Palm Springs, Calif.



NEW YORK TIMES

The Clarks’ pool in Palm Springs is a mid-century classic down to its kidney shape.

been going to Palm Springs every April the last few years, in particular, for the design aspect of the area. He rents a mid-century-modern home.

“We were pretty specific in wanting a place with a pool and a great outdoor area,” McKenzie said.

The owners of the house, a three-bedroom two-bathroom home from the era

of the Case Study Houses, “did an amazing job with lighting and furniture. And from that standpoint, you have a nice clean, simple interior with clean furnishings.”

The home’s owners, Lindy and Robert Clark, who live in Seattle, bought it in 2004 as a vacation house and decided to rent it out. In recent years, 30 per cent of

their business has come from repeat renters.

“Most of the people renting from us are architects or in the fashion business,” said Lindy Clark, a sales manager for a furniture company in Seattle. “We realized that people are going for the furniture and the way the house looks.”

Since so many of their renters are repeat customers, the Clarks try to keep the property, which rents for \$1,150 to \$1,400 a week depending on the season, looking fresh by adding or replacing pieces each year.

The Clarks say they don’t worry about the furniture being damaged. Because most of their renters appreciate the design so much, “most people take care of it,” said Robert Clark, a principal with an interior design firm. “It’s not that they tippy-toe around either.”

Eco-friendly design is a draw in Vail, Colo., said Joseph Sobin, marketing manager at Peak Properties. “Most other companies talk about fine linens and Viking stoves, and the reality is these are standard in luxe homes,” he said. “We are trying to also push the green aspect of the home and the decor.”

# Squamish strives to ‘embrace its quirksiness’

ALISON APPELBE  
Special to The Journal  
SQUAMISH, B.C.

Strategically located halfway between Vancouver and Whistler on Highway 99, Squamish has long been the proverbial pit stop.

Arguably, its best-known feature — apart from a granite bluff called Stawamus Chief — is the McDonald’s restaurant marking the turnoff into the town.

But if a posse of young professionals has its way, the District of Squamish will complete a slow transformation from rustic resource-industry hub — where passing vehicles pop in for gas and burgers — into a modestly affluent community with a stable economy that includes small high-tech companies and sophisticated outdoor recreation.

“We want to be a self-sustaining community that can stand on its own — without depending on the highway,” says David Thompson in his office at the new Squamish Adventure Centre — a striking timber edifice, just off the highway, that likens itself (in impact) to the Sydney Opera House.

While Thompson works in business development for the Squamish Sustainability Corporation (owned by the district), he is also the marketing chair for Callaghan Valley, a location closer to Whistler that will host cross-country skiing and ski jumping at the 2010 Winter Olympics. It’s a telling job combination.

Squamish would like to be known as the principal Nordic (as opposed to alpine) ski centre along this Sea-to-Sky corridor, and attract at least some of the business (and glory) away from Whistler. It is looking to become a hip, multi-faceted, outdoorsy community — “smart, young and family-oriented,” says Thompson.

In other words, much more than a pit stop.

Helping it along will be the \$600-million upgrade of the troublesome highway, to be completed for the Olympics (and currently a tangle of construction). Another kudo is the recent opening of Quest University, a private, non-profit liberal arts and science university and a model of sustainability issues. Further, the small Capilano University is planning a larger downtown campus.

Efforts are underway to add greenways and blueways (this is watery terrain). The downtown has been wired for fibre optics. And there’s a detailed plan to transform the waterfront — 70 acres fronting the harbour, inlet and estuary — into higher-density business, residential and cultural facilities, with a multi-modal transportation hub, marina, boardwalk and public green space.

At the same time, says Thompson, Squamish

wants to retain some of the funky, artsy character reflected in both ramshackle wood-frame cottages and boat-sheds, and an attractive new development of condos (sold out) and townhouses called The Artisan.

“We’re a maturing community — and we need to embrace our quirksiness instead of being afraid of it,” he adds.

However, he cautions that change won’t happen overnight (the district recently spurned a major waterfront development that was well along in planning). Adds Thompson: “There’s a lot of public consultation. We’ll get there, but it will be on Squamish time.” Importantly, Squamish is also home to the sizable Sko’mish First Nation.

Meanwhile, Squamish remains one of the most active real estate markets in B.C. Half a dozen residential and commercial developments are in the works. Housing prices, if softening slightly, remain stable in what is an economically strong region. An average house is currently listed at about \$568,000.

On the recreation front, this self-proclaimed “outdoor recreation capital of Canada” has a hugely varied terrain that invites a range of activities.

Arguably its most unique feature is the Stawamus Chief, a 700-metre massif tackled by some of the best rock climbers in North America. However, there are half a dozen other rock climbs of lesser difficulty, and many climbers start out here.

Down on the waterfront, windsurfing and kiteboarding are huge. “You get winds of up to 40 knots — it lifts you right out of the water,” says kite-boarder Adrian Verhiel, who migrated here after working in the Alberta oilfields.

There are said to be 150 biking trails — from easy rides to ultra-challenging single tracks. Squamish hosts a number of races, including Test of Metal — a 67-kilometre course that climbs over 1,200 metres and draws competitive mountain bikers from around the world.

Just north of Squamish, as many as 4,000 bald eagles settle above a 65-kilometre stretch of Squamish River from November through February. A 1.5-kilometre dike trail runs along the river at Brackendale. The wider river estuaries attract 200 bird species, and birding is popular here.

Mountain rivers support white-water canoeing, kayaking and rafting. Tributaries and lakes draw fresh-water fishers. Golf courses include Furry Creek, Squamish Valley and Garibaldi Springs.

So, already, Squamish is more than a pit stop. When a major rockslide closed Highway 99 for five days in early August, “it didn’t cut us off,” Thompson points out.

For more, www.tourismsquamish.com. For the district, www.squamish.ca.



SUPPLIED

On the waterfront, windsurfing and kite-boarding are popular. Gusts of up to 40 knots can lift boarders right out of the water.

# ‘Granite’ motif or ‘glacier’ theme

SUMMIT  
Continued from F1

Natural-gas fireplaces and generous-sized balconies are standard. Interior decors come in a “granite” motif (“a warm, Whistler feel,” says Steffens) or a “glacier” theme with a more neutral palate. All units have laminate flooring in the living and kitchen areas and Berber wool carpets in the bedrooms and den.

The kitchen features a high-end stainless steel appliance quartet, including counter-depth fridge and duel-fuel range (gas top and electric oven), ultra-quiet dishwasher and over-the-range microwave.

A contemporary square double-sink and natural stone countertop are included. Kitchens also feature warm wood cabinetry with brushed-nickel handles. Custom millwork in several interior spaces is among upgrades offered.

Luxurious bathrooms include large soaker tubs, ceramic square sinks (two in the master-bedroom ensuite) porcelain tile floors and (in some homes) walk-in showers. Pressure-balanced faucets are by American Standard. Countertops are polished stone.

Double-glazed windows and sliding doors provide energy efficiency; heating is electric baseboard. Phone and cable outlets are in each bedroom and living area. All units are wired for high-speed Internet access.

Summits View units start at \$269,000. They will be ready for occupancy by mid-2010. For more information, visit www.eaglewind-squamish.com or call 1-877-892-5888. A model one-bedroom and den suite is at 1240 Pemberton Avenue in Squamish.



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The new Squamish Adventure Centre likens itself (in impact) to the Sydney Opera House.

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