

Globe Real Estate

INTERIORS



Open plans present creative challenges

A light palette and delicate accents give this modest townhouse space elegance and functionality



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We recently designed the interiors and furnished the show home in a boutique development of three townhouses. The project offers some good lessons for how to create elegance alongside utility when space is at a premium.

The main floor of each townhouse is entirely open, combining the kitchen, dining room and living room in an expansive space that feels like a great room. It's a place where a couple can relax, dine or work, together or, if they choose, without getting in each other's faces. And because of the openness, the furnishings can be moved around to suit any occasion.

The challenge, as with all open plans, is to ensure that each space will allow residents to do what they need to do, yet maintain a visual unity within the larger area.

We started with the kitchen. Located at the centre of the floor plan, it is the aesthetic anchor of the main level. We knew it had to be dramatic and well-ordered.

The drama was easy – the kitchen has dark-grey, Shaker-style cabinetry that goes all the way to the crown moulding, nine feet above the floor. The height gives the kitchen a stately, sophisticated air, and provides tons of additional storage.

We didn't want the room to be too dark, so we balanced the chromatic depth of the cabinets with a high-gloss white subway tile and subtle marble accent on the backsplash. Those elements, paired with the white counters and brushed-steel appliances, give the kitchen its utilitarian glamour.

Functionally, we went with a U-shaped configuration, maximizing counter space and providing an easy working triangle. The peninsula has a raised, standing bar on the dining room side, providing an attractive divider that keeps guests out of "the zone" without shutting them out completely. The added height of the bar hides the mess of the kitchen during a dinner party.



In the open space, top, residents can do what they need to do, yet visual unity is maintained. In the living area, above, furniture is comfortable but not huge. BARRY CALHOUN PHOTOGRAPHY

And it was entertaining we had in mind when we designed the dining space. Having the luxury of preplanning the furnishings before construction, we designed the area to accommodate a modest-sized dining table (30 by 72 inches), which easily seats six – or even eight in a pinch. For lighting, we called for a chandelier.

In addition, an extra-deep window ledge allowed us to

create a faux sitting window to give the space added depth and a touch of luxury.

In the living area, we wanted something cozier and more inviting, with comfortable furnishings, easy access to books, blankets and AV equipment.

The key to furnishing the space was finding a sofa and chairs that were comfortable but not gargantuan – low-slung arms and backs were a must – with deep, comfortable

seats and high-quality back cushions. We found elegant pieces with slim wooden legs and a small footprint. Their light grey and ivory colours blend beautifully with the finishes in the room, and the tall legs encourage the eye to travel to the ebonized oak floors running beneath them.

But coziness is not born of comfy furnishings alone. This space, which has a cool palette, needed a fireplace. The challenge was selecting a surround that would not visually overpower the room. We steered clear of intricate stone and wood, which are too robust and imposing for a chic urban townhouse. Instead, we designed a low-profile blackened-oak and marble-mosaic facade. Its simple form keeps things light and elegant.

To meet the storage and AV needs, we designed custom millwork for either side of the fireplace; there is open shelving for books and decorative objects above the level of the mantel. Below the shelves are 24-inch-deep cabinets that can conceal a TV and AV equipment, or throws, board games and other sundry treasures.

I admit it was tempting to go with dark cabinetry to enhance the intimacy of the liv-

ing space, but we restrained ourselves and chose white cabinets. Anything darker would have diminished the impact of the kitchen and compromised the open airiness of the great room.

The height of the millwork was kept the same in the kitchen and living areas. Nothing stops short of the ceiling. This is a wonderful small-space trick to minimize the number of horizontal planes cutting across the walls; it makes the room feel harmonious and grand.

For this project, we had to forgo our earthy West Coast furnishing favourites: solid-wood accent stools and driftwood tables. These would have been too bulky in a room that needs to be light and changeable.

Instead, we chose delicate accent tables and decorative accessories with feminine profiles and reflective surfaces. Their fine lines and crystal accents make the room feel dynamic and ephemeral, balancing out the weight of the black floor and the dark kitchen.

» Kelly Deck is the director of Kelly Deck Design, based in Vancouver, and the host of *Take it Outside* on HGTV.

ON SITE » VANCOUVER

Developer aims to fill rental gap with live/work units

BY THOMASINA BARNES

Grosvenor Americas has noticed a gap in Vancouver's housing market. The developer sees a lack of high-quality rental suites, a space it aims to fill with the Rise, a 92-unit, mixed-use development on Cambie Street – for renters only.

With the city's rental vacancy rate at 0.9 per cent, the Rise aims to offer an affordable alternative to those who prefer not to take on high mortgage payments.

"Given the newly implemented requirements and restrictions for acquiring a mortgage, many renters will find the Rise's mortgage-free lifestyle quite appealing," says Ryan Beechinor, senior vice-president and general manager in Vancouver for the international developer. "Plus, there



are no monthly strata fees."

The development offers 92 live/work lofts, townhouses and "sky flats," a state-of-the-art fitness facility with rooftop garden, proximity to retailers such as Home Depot, Winners and Save-On-Foods, and access to the new Canada Line transit system.

The Rise is a "real-world example of how a developer can meld urban living, nature and

a sense of community with destination retailers," Mr. Beechinor says.

"Grosvenor understands the need for urban density, and the need to develop not only environmentally friendly, but socially sustainable properties," he says.

The suites offer floor-to-ceiling windows, decks and balconies, hardwood floors and stainless-steel appliances.

The Rise

LOCATION: Vancouver

TYPE: Rental suites

DEVELOPER: Grosvenor Americas

PRICE: \$1,800 to \$3,120 monthly

SIZE: 720 to 1,453 square feet

SALES CENTRE: 485 West Eighth Ave.

CONTACT: (604) 876-7473 or www.therisevancouver.com

Paul Buck, a tenant in the building, says the development offers just what he needs, in a great location. "I was looking for the standard of

living I would have if I owned, without the commitment of a mortgage," he says. "I'm at the point in life where I am considering buying, but I'm not quite there yet."

"Living at the Rise allows me to enjoy the quality of life I look for, but also allows me to stay in the rental market until the real estate market is less frothy," Mr. Buck says.

The Cambie Street location seemed a natural choice for this type of live/work development, Mr. Beechinor says. "Uptown Vancouver's centre of gravity has shifted from the Granville Street corridor to a radically transformed Cambie Street, particularly north of Broadway toward False Creek, and the bridge to the downtown core," he says.

"A mixed-use development just makes good sense." » Special to *The Globe and Mail*

DONE DEAL » INDIAN ARM



LOT 2, BEST POINT INDIAN ARM

ASKING PRICE: \$248,800

SELLING PRICE: \$240,000

TAXES: \$357 (2007)

DAYS ON MARKET: 196

LISTING AGENT: Betsy Carstairs, Park Georgia Realty

This 8,040-square-foot lot is off the grid, and access is only by boat, but it is still "easily reached," says agent Betsy Carstairs.

"It is a 10-minute commute from Deep Cove," she explains. "There is no long drive and no ferry lineup. The owners can just hop in a boat and within minutes arrive at their private wilderness paradise."

The area is home to both permanent residents and, "outdoor enthusiasts who want an easily accessible vacation property," the agent says.

"The buyer works long hours and when he has time off, he wants to unwind with his family and play at the waters edge, kayaking, boating and swimming, or just hanging by the fire pit watching the sunset."

The property has water rights at 500 gallons a day from a fresh water mountain spring. The property, with 75 feet of water frontage, has a new dock, which was built last summer with an extra slip for visitors. The dock is shared with two other lots.

DONE DEALS
BY THOMASINA BARNES

ON SITE » SQUAMISH

Project blends urban flair and outdoor fare

Summits View

LOCATION: Squamish

TYPE: Condo suites and towns

DEVELOPER: Solterra Development Corp.

PRICE: \$284,900 to \$744,900

SIZE: 576 to 1,513 square feet

SALES CENTRE: 1240 Pemberton Ave., Squamish, and 872 Seymour St., Vancouver

CONTACT: 1-877-892-5888 (Squamish), 1-866-789-8386 (Vancouver) or www.eaglewindsquamish.com

BY THOMASINA BARNES

As is fitting for a development located mid-way between downtown Vancouver and Whistler Village, the developer of Summits View in Squamish is creating homes that are one part ski chalet, one part urban condo.

The blend of townhouses and mid-rise apartments is the first phase of Solterra Development Corp.'s master-planned Eaglewind community.

"Summits View has been designed for individuals who seek all the luxuries of a downtown Vancouver home, with all the rustic charm of a Whistler vacation home," says Laura Rizzo, Solterra's vice-



president of marketing.

The Squamish area has long been popular with enthusiasts of mountain biking, rock climbing, windsurfing, hiking, fishing and back-country skiing, but it is also "rich in future potential," Ms. Rizzo explains.

The whole city is undergoing a major transformation that will continue even after the 2010 Winter Olympics and completion of the Sea to Sky Highway improvements, "giving home buyers much to look forward to," she adds.

There are proposals for a rapid ferry service to connect downtown Squamish to downtown Vancouver, as well as an 80-acre waterfront development and a world-class ski resort featuring two PGA golf courses.

The six-storey Summits View building contains 134 units. Apartments feature natural gas fireplaces, stone countertops and a mixture of wide-plank laminate wood flooring

and Berber carpeting.

The kitchens are equipped with stainless-steel appliances. The building itself offers amenities that include a media and games room and a rooftop courtyard.

To cater to outdoor enthusiasts, a dog-wash station as well as a ski-waxing and bike tune-up area are offered.

When completed, the 25-acre Eaglewind development will include an 11-acre public park, a gym and juice bar, a commercial/retail building called Eaglewind Landing, a pedestrian piazza showcasing the works of local artist Mike Tyler, and a 10,000-square-foot seniors' centre.

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