

5955 Balsam 41 condos in an 12-storey tower by Grosvenor Canada

Michael Sasges

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5955 BALSAM

Location: 43rd and Balsam, Vancouver

Project size: 41 residences, 12-storey building

Residence size: 1,215 sq.ft. - 2,406 sq. ft.

Prices: From \$889,900

Presentation centre address: 2036 West 41st

Hours: Noon to 5 p.m., Sat - Thu

Telephone: 604-264-5955

Web: kerrisdaleliving.com

Developer: Grosvenor Canada

Architect: IBI/HB

Interior design: Scott Trepp Interior Design

Tentative completion: August 2008

The 5955 Balsam story is simple: International property developer responds to locally expressed need. It is also complicated: International property developer responds with a product it hopes worthy of neighbourhood and putative market.

The developer is Grosvenor Canada, owned by one of the world's great family fortunes. The Duke of Westminster's investment history can be traced back almost 350 years, to a fortuitous marriage that brought 300 acres of today's central London into the Grosvenor family fold.

The need is one that has been announced and examined from time to time on these pages, the opportunity to age in place.

It was most loudly and frequently heard in inquiries from west-side Vancouver residents to one of the oldest real estate outfits on the west side, Macdonald Realty, reports George Wong of Platinum Project Marketing Group, Macdonald Realty, organizer of the 5955 Balsam sales and marketing campaign.

Grosvenor and Platinum are aiming the project at two groups of older west-side residents, reports Lily Korstanje, the Platinum Project sales manager for 5955 Balsam.

"We think 5955 Balsam will appeal to the discerning elderly who want to maintain a west-side lifestyle, but do not want the stairs or the maintenance of the large family home. . . .," she says.

"Additionally, we expect strong interest from discerning empty nesters who are of the modern mindset that 'there is life after kids and retirement,' who want to get out of the large home with the maintenance and get into the lock-up-and-go apartment, travel, eat out and start adventuring"

"The operative word here is 'discerning.' These people will come from large custom homes and will not compromise on the 'sense' of space or quality."

The 5955 Balsam homes will be big homes, absolutely and comparatively, three or four to a floor, and they will be finished richly.

"Many new Vancouver condominium developments focus on smaller plans that reduce room sizes, eliminate storage rooms and do not allow room for traditionally sized furniture. It also creates many suites per floor," George Wong says of the square footages.

"At 5955 Balsam, our suites start at well over 1,200 square feet, with the majority of suites over 1,500 square feet. What this does is create a 'boutique' development with just three or four suite on a floor and provides its owners with a sense of exclusivity."

The "big" names in the features line-up, Miele, Dornbracht, Duravit, were almost inevitable.

"It is definitely the very first multi-family west-side development that offers these custom-home, top-of-the-line European name brands," Lily Korstanje says.

As previously mentioned, Grosvenor Canada has established for itself an ambitious agenda at 5955 Balsam, its first residential development in the Lower Mainland.

Outside, the building, when completed, "respects and honours the neighbourhood's legacy," in the words of the sales literature. Inside, the homes will address "the contemporary needs of 21st century residents," again in the words of the sales literature.

Components in the 5955 Balsam homes, Korstanje reports, include "open floor plans with a contemporary squared-off configuration for functional/ optimum use of space; great living /dining/family rooms which would accommodate large pieces of heirloom furniture; and flex spaces that can be used as an office, or a pantry, for storage, as media room, perhaps a guest bedroom."

The decision to commit more than 80 per cent of the site " to landscaping" will be the most visible legacy statement from Grosvenor. "The choice to landscape a substantial part of the site will provide a beautiful integration into the existing neighbourhood," Korstanje says.

"The homes and streets around the site have been here for over a century. It is the tall, mature flowering plants and trees that line these streets that make Kerrisdale so visually pleasing. 5955 Balsam carries on Kerrisdale's appreciation for a beautiful backdrop to the homes and buildings in this community."

James Patillo, a Grosvenor executive, also points to interior finishes "that nod to the richness of the past -- the warm teak and walnut hardwood, the bottocino classico marble -- create a warm and distinctive backdrop, totally in keeping with the distinctive character of Kerrisdale while the open, flexible floor plans leave buyers the room to design and stylize their homes with the greatest of flexibility."

Grosvenor and Platinum are calling three of the residences "garden homes," to reflect their ground-level location.

"With extensive landscaping around the building and nine-foot-high ceilings, these homes will feel larger as the exterior space will read as if part of the homes and provide a 'connectedness' with the gardens," Korstanje says.

"Two of the garden homes have private enclosed garages that are directly accessible from the residences offering utmost privacy and convenience."

The grounds will have a "Great Lawn," for pet runs; a lawn bowling and croquet green; a fireside terrace for resident gatherings; and a "poet's corner . . . a secluded area in the extensive landscaped garden where one can contemplate, meditate and ruminate," Korstanje says.

One common amenity Grosvenor is not installing at 5955 Balsam is a fitness centre.

One reason is the presence of Kerrisdale Community Centre a few blocks away. Its facilities are well known to anyone who has raised a family on the west-side.

Another reason is money. "Many Kerrisdale residents have memberships in various private clubs, like the Arbutus Club, and much prefer to stay with the basics in the residential building to keep maintenance fees manageable," Korstanje says.

The 5955 Balsam news release opens with a strong statement, that the project "is the first of its kind in over five years."

George Wong does not issue superlatives easily or readily; they have a nasty propensity of biting back over a long career, and his has been long and successful.

"There have not been any high-rise/ high-end developments in Kerrisdale for over five years, and no new development that matches or comes close to the luxury we are offering at 5955 Balsam," he says.

"With the quality of concrete [construction], the views and a strong developer name like Grosvenor, a project with this winning combination will likely not come again in this lifetime."



5955 Balsam Photograph by : Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun



The message from Lily Korstanje of Platinum Project Marketing, and from the 5955 Balsam sales centre, is that west-side residents do not need to compromise when they want to move on from their large-lot, multi-level family homes. Photograph by : Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun



The double-basin sinks, in stainless steel, will be mounted under the counters and filled from a single-hole faucet with pull-out spray from KWC, in polished chrome. Photograph by : Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun



The Liebherr fridge and the Miele dishwasher in the 5955 Balsam kitchens will be faced with millwork that matches the vertical-grain, white oak, flat panel cabinet doors. Grosvenor Canada intends to install a Miele food-prep package consisting of a stainless-steel gas-cooktop and an under-cabinet slide-out range hood and a built-in convection wall-oven. Photograph by : Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun



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