

The best of both worlds

Walter's Place on North Shore is near urban amenities, but fits the bill for nature buffs

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At top, a rendering of Walter's Place, a five-storey condo-apartment project in North Vancouver by developer Milori Homes. Bottom left, the sales centre. Bottom right, balconies are spacious, with room enough for a table grouping for four, as well as a barbecue.



Kitchens, which are big enough for two people to work there at the same time, feature three-quarter-inch quartz counters and full-height marble backsplashes.

Karly Cunningham and Elise Le Brun love the character of their East Vancouver neighbourhood, with its young, multicultural population, interesting shops and increasingly popular restaurants. But try as they might, they just couldn't find something that allowed them to "tick off all the boxes" for a larger two-bedroom suite there.

Then they took a good look around their North Shore "playground", where they love to bike, run and walk their

dogs. What they recently found was Walter's Place, a new Lynn Valley condo development to be located at the gateway to North Vancouver's great "out-back" of forest trails that criss-cross the slopes of the local mountains. It also offers the best of both worlds by being a quick walk to Lynn Valley shopping centre with its banks, grocery stores and new public library.

"Our life is pretty much centred around the North Shore," says Cunningham, who with Le Brun, runs Big Bold Brand, a Vancouver branding and advertising consultancy that serves the growing social enterprise sector. "I'm a mountain biker and Elise is a runner. And we always have the dogs out. We probably go across the bridge at least once a day, if not twice ..."

"We wanted a two-bedroom, one with a decent-size second bedroom," said Cunningham, who bought her 630-square-foot suite seven years ago in Hastings-Sunrise.

"But the problem we were running into in East Van is that they were all significantly smaller second bedrooms, almost like a den," said Cunningham, who had invested with other owners in upgrading her building, helping to cultivate its reputation as a well-maintained one. But that just made it harder to contemplate moving and starting all over

again with upgrades to another older development in the area.

While they initially looked on the North Shore, they couldn't find condos that were in their price range or met their needs, which include a north-facing suite, adequate secured parking and lots of windows.

So when they heard about an advance showing at Walter's Place, they literally ran and biked to it, not even stopping to change their workout gear.

"I think we kind of crashed a realtor party that night," Cunningham quips. "I showed up on my bike and Elise showed up in her running gear. I laughed and told the staff 'So I guess your target market just walked in the door!'"

What they ended up buying was a two-bedroom 846-square-foot home with a mountain view.

Named after Lynn Valley pioneer Walter Draycott, Walter's Place is a five-storey building in the West Coast modern genre, with wood pillars at the entrance and views of the mountains and surrounding area.

So far, sales have been better than expected, with 20 of the 35 suites selling over the last month, says Hesam Delhimi, a principal of the Milori family of companies.

The suites have an openconcept design, which he says reflects social trends in housing today.

"The interpretation of the kitchen has really changed," he said, adding that the developer's design firm had noted at one point that making larger kitchens like those in Walter's Place does push up the developer's costs.



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Nevertheless, Milori insisted, knowing that this is what many people are asking for these days.



"Living rooms and bedrooms are getting smaller and kitchens are getting bigger. We told our interior design firm to go to town with it and make the kitchen as big as possible. Nowadays, this is your entertainment centre and people come in (to the show room) and see the value of it."

The kitchens are wide enough to allow two people to prepare meals without bumping into each other. The area is further enlarged by positioning the wall and microwave ovens at a convenient height on a wall adjacent to the cooktop and refrigerator spaces. Milled open shelving, framed by high-gloss cabinetry, rounds out the kitchen walls.

Counters are surfaced in three-quarter-inch-thick quartz in light and darker marble-like patterns complemented by a full-height marble backsplash. Sinks are Kindred-brand squared double sinks. Appliance packages feature a Fisher & Paykel 17-cubicfoot single door refrigerator with bottom-mount freezers, a Bosch dishwasher, cooktop and wall oven, and a Panasonic microwave. All units come with energy- effi-



At top, the light, airy bedroom in the show suite. Below left, storage lockers have roll-down doors for security and enough space to accommodate sports equipment. Bottom right, an adjacent wall in the kitchen houses the wall and microwave ovens and open shelving.

cient side- by- side Whirlpool washers and dryers.

If bedrooms are a little smaller these days, it's hard to tell at Walter's Place, where they come with built- in closets, removing the need for bulky furniture items like bureaus in the bed area. The millwork is designed so that occupants can customize their bedroom storage by adding or removing shelves.

Balconies are spacious, with room for a table grouping for four at one end and a barbecue with a natural gas bib at the other.

Penthouse balconies boast the most space, with up to 900 square feet, room enough for planter boxes and ample room for garden and lounge furniture.

That kind of balcony space was a major selling point for John and Christine Boyle, who have lived in Lynn Valley for 37 years before deciding to downsize by purchasing one of the penthouses.

"I love gardening and I am struggling with giving that up," says John, a civil engineer who retired from full-time work this year. "On the terrace, I can at least have planters."

The couple faced their own challenges in deciding whether or not to stay in Lynn Valley.

"If you want a rancher with a garden in North Vancouver, it doesn't exist," says Christine, a retired school teacher. "It does, but it is in Delbrook at \$ 1.5 mil-lion."

They considered downsizing to Se-chelt, Vancouver Island or the Fraser Valley, but realized that meant they wouldn't see their adult kids and grand-children as often. They also looked at (but discarded) the idea of a highrise.

In the end, they were pleased with what they saw at Walter's Place, which is a short ride down the hill from the current Princess Park home they bought for \$68,500 back in the 1970s.

Meanwhile, Cunningham, a marketer, praised Milori for successfully appealing to active types aged 35 to 45, while also drawing in baby boomers like the Boyles. Milori also "nailed it" with the residential storage, a five-by-seven-foot space with a high ceiling and a sturdy roll-down door for security, she said.

"A lot of the developers are advertising to the North Shore audience, but they are not delivering on the storage space that you need to live the lifestyle that you want to live.

"Most people on the (North Shore) have skis and snowboards and snowshoes, but developers are providing these mesh storage units that are like takeout windows for thieves and that was just not working for us."

Residents also have access to an amenity room and private garden with barbecues.

As an incentive, Milori is offering one year of free Shaw cable TV, high-speed Internet and home telephone. Options include a home technology package to remotely control the thermostat, home audio and lighting systems from a cell-phone or tablet.