

Prelude 50 condos in an 6-storey building by Cedar Developments

Sun

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The Prelude project comprises 50 residences in six storeys, as well as two free-standing "city" homes. The contemporary undertaking from Cedar Developments is by architect Stuart Lyon. Occupancy is slated for the fall 2013

PRELUDE

Project Address: 6311 Cambie St., Vancouver

Project size: 50 condos in a 6-storey building; 2 free-standing "city" homes

Residence size: 1 bed 595 - 612 sq. ft; 1 bed + den 696 - 704 sq. ft; 1 bed loft 967-1122; 2 bed 804 - 982 sq. ft; 2 bed + den 1044 - 1130 sq. ft; 3 bed city homes 1536 sq. ft

Prices: 1 bed from \$387,900; 1 bed + den from \$443,900; 1 bed loft from \$601,000; 2 bed from \$570,900; 2 bed + den from \$813,000; 3 bed city homes \$1,175,900

Sales centre address: Unit 225, Oakridge Centre mall (Cambie and West 41st Ave.) Hours: Open daily during mall hours

Telephone: 604-616-7008

Web: www.preludecityhomes.com

Developer: Cedar Developments

Architect: Stuart Lyon, gBL Architects

Interior Design: Jane McCutcheon

Occupancy: Fall 2013

Sales begin: Immediately

In some ways, the Prelude development could be seen as a test for the Cambie corridor. A combination of housing and commercial space has been filling in Cambie at the northern end, near downtown, for years, and the recently sold-out Marine Gate-way reflects growing demand at the boundary between Richmond and south Vancouver.

Still, many are waiting to see how the Canada Line and higher-density development will play out in the mid-section of the corridor.

Henry Tom is getting his feet wet. now. The owner-principal of Cedar Developments began thinking about a kind of project there during the recession of 2008.

In 2009, he acquired two duplexes on the west side of Cambie, just north of West 49th Avenue near Tisdall Park. Their lots now form the basis of the Prelude site.

"I jumped in when others were hanging back, because it was an opportunity to do some-thing interesting," Tom says. "I knew I could always put in townhouses as a backup plan."

He acknowledges that the opportunity has come with some challenges. At the time he began the process, an official community development plan had not yet been created for the area. The City of Vancouver had some general ideas about building heights, the type of density it wanted to go in, and was discussing some of the specifics - but the exact details had not been determined. It made for a steep learning curve, and some shifting targets.

Tom believes this is the first multi-family project where the city has asked for "deconstruction" of the buildings on the site. Instead of simply coming in with a wrecking ball to take down the existing homes, workers are going through a painstaking process of hand-removing elements. The idea is to reduce the amount of material going into the landfill by diverting whatever can be recycled to another usage.

Tom grew up in Vancouver's Chinatown in the 1960s, and received his bachelor's degree in biology from UBC. Then he moved to Ontario to study at York, obtaining a master's degree in urban planning with a focus in environmental studies. After working there in the early 1980s, he returned to Vancouver to help his parents with their properties here.

He tackled single-family home construction in Richmond and Vancouver, eventually changing to townhomes in the Lower Mainland and Victoria. His previous condo experience includes a heritage con-version project at West 16th Avenue and Burrard. When it came to Prelude, Tom had a clear-cut vision.

"I wanted 'end users' to live here, not as many investors," Tom explains. "There are an equal number of two-bed-room and one-bedroom units, and they're equally distributed around the perimeter of the building."

Four lofts facing Cambie Street will allow people living on the lower floors access to some generously sized homes in the 1,000 square foot range - a relatively rarity in Vancouver for condos.

There are also two free-standing "city homes" at the rear of the property. They will combine the convenience of the location with a single-family home feel - a little additional privacy, and a little green space for the homeowners.

Having a couple of units in the back, says Tom, conforms with a city philosophy of animating laneways - meaning that the back of a site shouldn't just be an afterthought, but that there should be an attempt made to create positive traffic flow through and around it.

The six-storey building will also include four commercial spaces on the ground floor. They've been designed to have wide frontages but shallow depth in the units, making for a "street mall" feel.

They, along with the residential homes, have been attracting a lot of attention from people already in the Oakridge area.

"The business people who have been approaching us either are already living here, or who plan on moving here," says project marketer Al DeGenova of Focus Project Marketing. "We're talking a hairdresser, a physiotherapist, a coffee shop - all stuff that's going to help contribute to the general neighbourhood."

The pedestrian portion of the area has also been factored in. Cedar Developments was asked to include public walkways through the site, since there are no east-west cross streets between West 45th and 49th. The walkways make it more convenient for people to stroll over to the Canada Line station at Cambie and 49th.

Stu Lyon, principal of gBL Architects, says working with the city on the overall look and feel of Prelude led to some very positive changes.

"The public walk-throughs let us move the entry to the main residential area away from the frontage and the commercial units," Lyon explains.

"Now the building points toward its own entryway, with a side yard with a water feature."

Lyon's design created a con-temporary building with clean lines. Deciding on concrete as the construction material allowed for longer cantilevers, extending the top floors with the building out over the lower ones. That in turn allowed for the extension of natural rain cover for the building. The two lane homes are essentially mini-versions of the main building, creating subtle symmetry on the site.

Tom says he wanted to make the homes very livable. Aside from making the units a little larger than what you might see in other neighbourhoods of Vancouver, he included high-end Fisher & Paykel kitchen appliances, Kohler kitchen and bathroom fixtures, and granite and stone countertops. One of the units in Prelude was intended for his mother (she ultimately decided not to move in because she's not ready to be a mom yet.) "I told him there was a few areas he could save a few hundred thousand dollars in with-out any real detriment to the building," says DeGenova with a laugh.

"But he said no - he wanted everything to be to a high standard of quality."

For his part, Tom admits that there have been some costs and delays that he didn't anticipate while navigating the uncharted territory of developing in the Cambie corridor. There were hours upon hours of discussion for certain details. However, he says it's all been worth it.

"How often does a small developer get to help influence city policy?"

"I hope that the fact that we made this happen will inspire other small developers to take a moment to think about helping Cambie Street move into the future."



This is the northwest facing view imagined from the fifth storey of the Prelude building in the oakridge neighbourhood.



The units will include high-end Fisher & Paykel kitchen appliances, and granite and stone countertops.



Kitchen and bathroom fixtures will be from Kohler.



Architect Stuart Lyon (right) with developer Henry Tom. KIM STALLKNECHT / VANCOUVER SUN