

## A STATEMENT IN YALETOWN

### Brenhill development includes homes, rentals and social housing units

CLAUDIA KWAN



Kitchens are fitted with Miele appliances, gas ranges and marble countertops.



Brenhill opted not to create a larger number of smaller units: more than half of the market homes have three bedrooms.



8X on the Park will rise above Emery Barnes Park in downtown Vancouver. Occupancy is expected to begin in late 2019.

Speak with the executive vice-president of developer Brenhill for anything more than a moment, and it quickly becomes clear how much of a passion project the company's 8X on the Park development has become.

In addition to having a handle on all of the finer details of the homes — more on that in a moment — Max Kerr also easily waxes rhapsodic on some of the philosophical ideas that guided the project, and makes the case that it created multiple benefits for everyone involved.

To grasp that argument may first require readers to think of 8X as a three-in-one development. As part of a property-swap agreement between the City of Vancouver and Brenhill, the developer took on the task of building a new Jubilee House facility for the 127 Society for Housing. The previous building (located across the street to the new one) had 87 units designated for low-income residents; New Jubilee House will have 162 social housing units.

"The great thing about this is that there's no displacement or disruption," Kerr explains. "The people currently living in Jubilee transfer over to the new homes the day they're complete, and they stay in the neighbourhood."

When he speaks of being in the neighbourhood, it's literal rather than figurative; Brenhill's offices are across the street from New Jubilee House, and kitty corner to 8X, which will rise above Emery Barnes Park in Yaletown.

The company is also invested in a long-term fashion in the building; it will own and operate 121 rental units there. Kerr believes it's a real statement of Brenhill's commitment to quality.

"We believe in building it once and building it right — that's what makes sense from a cost-benefit ratio," Kerr says. "We saw this as an incredible opportunity to develop long-term rental assets in Vancouver."

The third component of 8X on the Park comprises the homes available for purchase.

"With so many projects, people ask how big the units are, how much does it cost, and what's the view," says Tracie

McTavish, executive director of project marketer Rennie Marketing Systems. "This is so much more than that. The attention spent on all of the details is truly staggering."

Just walk through the two show suites at the sales centre and you can see what he means. It begins right at the entry point, where the threshold is demarcated in marble.

The closet housing the washer and dryer has been cleverly configured to have side-by-side appliances, which leaves room for a Caesarstone countertop for folding clothes and a storage tower for linens. More stone abounds in the kitchen and bathrooms, adding a luxurious yet low-maintenance look. The wall-hung vanities in the bathrooms are cleanly contemporary, with included inserts providing smart storage.

Project name: 8X On The Park

Project size: 200 market units, 121 rental homes in a 35-storey concrete construction highrise

Project location: 1111 Richards St (& Helmcken), Vancouver

Residence size: two and three bed, 1,041 — 1,781 sq ft

Prices: two and three bed from \$1.58 million

Developer: Brenhill Developments

Architect: GBL Architects

Interior design: BYU Design

Sales centre: 1149 Hamilton St., Vancouver

Hours: open daily noon — 6 p.m.

Telephone: 604-801-6861

Website: 8xonthepark.com

Occupancy: Fall/Winter 2019

## 8X WILL GIVE CYCLISTS A LIFT

**We put the amenities on the roof to create a real gathering and mingling space for residents.**



*Expansive windows will maximize views and allow for plenty of natural light.*

All of the inserts in the kitchen millwork are included as well, creating clever spots to stash cutlery, pots and pans, baking sheets, dry goods, and recycling. With a look of subtle pride, Kerr points out the hypoallergenic aluminum sheathing lining the pulls for the lower cabinetry, and the sleek overhead grille dispensing air conditioning in the homes. The high-end roller shades and millwork inside the closets are included as standard; there are no upgrades available because there is no need for any, Kerr says.

The larger show suite — replicating a three-bedroom unit — has a clearly defined entry foyer designed to evoke the feel of a singlefamily home. The U-shaped space limned by a full wall of millwork, enclosed range, and kitchen sink and breakfast bar, is stunningly wide, leaving plenty of room for two people to cook at the same time, or for smooth traffic flow as guests mingle during an evening in.

The units are pre-wired to function as “smart homes,” with capacity for future upgrades built in. The building has also been built to LEED Gold standard, and houses its own geothermal plant. The distinctive diamond cross-hatching on 8X’s exterior serves a functional purpose; the 20-inch-deep diagonal ledges passively provide shade from the glare of the sun.

Kerr also wanted to provide strong incentive for residents to consider using

their bicycles to get around.

“We have a dedicated bike elevator with a separate entry point to the building, and a dedicated storage and bike repair area,” he says. “If we simplify the process of getting the bike out — instead of having to haul it in and out of an apartment, or an out-of-the-way storage area — we figure people will be much more likely to cycle around, especially since they can so easily connect to the bike routes downtown.”

Brenhill made some other decisions in designing the building, especially when it came to the unit types and access to amenities. Instead of creating a larger number of smaller units, it reconfigured floor plans to have a higher proportion of bigger homes. For instance, more than 40 per cent of the rental homes are three-bedroom apartments; that rises to more than 50 per cent in the market homes. While the three penthouse two-level homes have private access to the outdoors, the developer decided to house the common area of the building on the top floor as well.

“We put the amenities on the roof to create a real gathering and mingling space for residents,” Kerr says. “It’s 33,000 square feet, with a sky lounge, terrace, water feature, barbecues, gym, and theatre all in one.”

So far, there has been significant interest from all demographic groups, including first-time homebuyers, families looking for ways to stay in the downtown core, and downsizers drawn to the energy of Yaletown after years in single-family residential neighbourhoods.

The vast majority of the 4,000 people who pre-registered interest in the development — more than 90 per cent, reports McTavish — have local addresses from around Metro Vancouver.

Kerr says that’s rewarding in and of itself, given Brenhill’s longstanding history as a local company, and its strong desire to create a new and innovative take on housing solutions for the local market.