

## Downsizing space, upsizing luxury

Opal suites another perfect blend of form and function, with an eye on safety

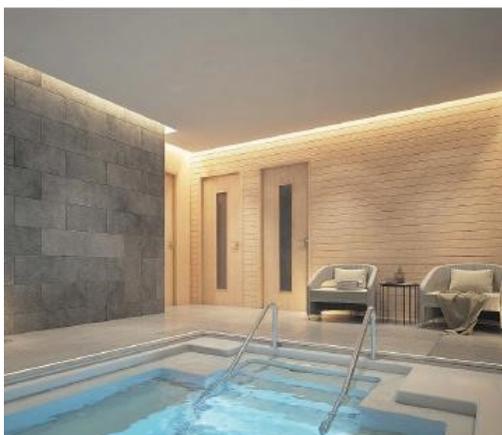
Mary Frances Hill SMART SPACES



An artist's rendering depicts the lobby area of the Opal, a 130-unit seniors' community that will be rising on King Edward Avenue at Cambie Street.



An artist's rendering depicts the lobby of the restorative wellness spa that's part of the Opal suites.



An artist's rendering of the hydrotherapy pool at Opal, among the multiple amenities that will be on offer to residents in this new community in Cambie Village.

When Diane Shrubbs took on the challenge of creating the suites at Opal, a seniors' community coming to Cambie Village, she knew buyers would be looking



The Opal show suite, on display at Vancouver's City Square, is the work of Diane Shrubbs, who says the goal was to create a luxurious and safe space for seniors to live in.

for an increasingly easier and enhanced lifestyle.

Functionality in the design would be critical, but she also knew residents wouldn't want to compromise on comfort and esthetics.

When she first applied her creativity to the notion of luxury retirement — the theme that defines Opal homes — Shrubbs considered all the practicalities to be addressed in the display space. Given the homes range from conventional spaces to units designed for those who will need care, she focused on safety and comfort.

"Many have worked hard and raised families, and now it's time for them to relax and enjoy," says Shrubbs, principal of Shrubbs Design Partnership Inc. "What do they need at this point in their lives? They need less space to live in and somewhere they can live safely and attend to health issues if they occur."

The details make a big difference in the development, which requires at least one occupant of each unit to be 55-plus years of age. Shrubbs hid lighting in the kitchen island and bathroom vanities, while closet interiors allow for built-in storage. Meantime, grab bars in the bath and showers are understated, resembling towel bars.

Even small touches that many would not notice — like a flat-profile flooring that will ease the transition from the carpeted bedrooms to the laminate wood

flooring — will help mobility and reduce tripping hazards. Electrical outlets are mounted higher than the standard 12 inches, also an aid to mobility issues, she says.

The biggest challenge presented by Shrubbs' Opal work was marrying functionality with beauty.

"This is the ongoing challenge on almost any design project, and particularly for this demographic," Shrubbs says. "Finding the balance between functional security items, while providing beauty and practicality, must coexist in a successful project. If only functional items are addressed, the comfort and esthetics will be compromised and visa versa."

To achieve this in the display space, Shrubbs kept to light neutrals and simple, clean finishes, introducing a splash of colour via bright florals in artwork.

"These large-format paintings are an uplifting complement to the clean and simple elegant backdrop," Shrubbs says.

The project is also noteworthy for its more than 30,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenities. These include a movement studio with a dramatic rock salt wall, a gym, a wellness spa, library lounge and games area, business and IT centre, and an open display kitchen for culinary demonstrations and intergenerational cooking classes.

### Opal

**What:** A 130-unit development including one six-storey and two four-storey buildings with 44 condos for sale, 56 for rental, and 30 complex-care suites

**Where:** 438 West King Edward Avenue, Vancouver

**Developer and builder:** Opal Retirement Inc. and Opal Development Partnership

**Residence sizes and prices:** one-bedroom condos 612 -- 850 square feet, from \$732,000; one-bedroom and den 837 -- 922 square feet, \$1,150,000 -- \$1,230,000; available two-bedrooms 938 -- 1,178 square feet, \$1,056,000 -- \$1,428,000

**Sales centre address:** 130 -- 555 West 12th Ave. (City Square, upper shops level)

**Sales centre hours:** Mon -- Fri noon -- 3 p.m.; Sat -- Sun noon -- 6 p.m.; Appointments by arrangement

