

SCALING THE HEIGHTS

The 42-storey Escala project brings 'affordable luxury' to Burnaby

CLAUDIA KWAN



Full-sized furniture can easily be accommodated in bedrooms. Their carpeted floors can be upgraded to wide-plank flooring.

SUPPLIED



The grand lobby in Escala — part of 'the renaissance of north Burnaby' — brings a luxury hotel or resort feel to the project.



Floor-to-ceiling windows in the luxurious Escala units will maximize natural light and deliver spectacular views of downtown, Burrard Inlet and the North Shore.

At a recent preview event for the homes at Escala, potential buyers were lined up around the block at the sales centre, waiting for their turn to have a look at the two show suites, scale model and digital images of the development.

George Wong, principal of project marketer Magnum Projects, believes

much of the interest stems from the versatility and unique nature of the Ledingham McAllister project.

"What Escala is bringing to the area — part of the renaissance of north Burnaby, if you will — is affordable luxury," he says. "There isn't much in the way of upgrades available for the homes — other than potentially changing out some of the flooring — because it's all pretty much there already."

Walking over to the model, he references the luxury hotel or resort feel the design team tried to impart to the project. The four buildings of the development (including the Aviara tower completed last year) are separated by winding paths, curving driveways, water features and terraced landscaping. A courtyard provides an additional private area to enjoy the outdoors.

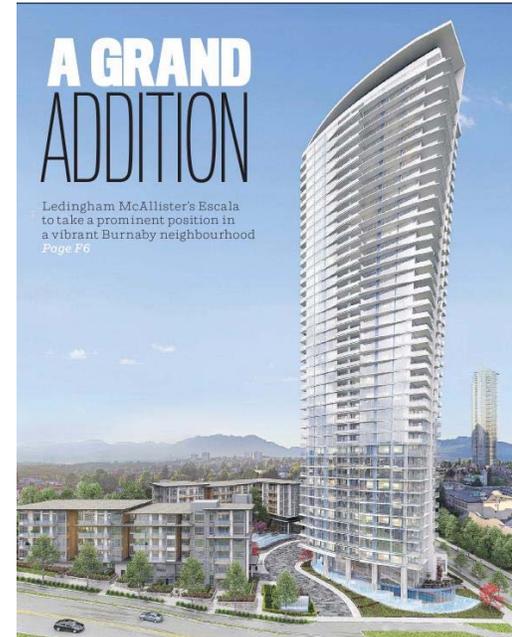
The list of amenities available indoors is long, as well. On one floor, residents can take advantage of an indoor swimming pool, steam and sauna rooms, a hot tub, a yoga or dance studio, and a sizable gym with fitness equipment.

If they're looking to entertain, they can do so at a state-of-the-art private kitchen or wine and coffee bar area, a private movie screening room, a lounge area complete with fireplace or at billiards and PingPong tables.

Residents can book overnight visitors into two guest suites, and ensure harmony by booking music practice in two individual music rooms. All homes include central air conditioning and nine-foot ceilings. With one-bedroom units sized at more than 600 square feet and two-bedroom units in the area of 900 square feet, Wong says the idea was for individual homes to feel comfortable and highly livable — and to have something for everyone.

"The concrete tower will be one of the tallest buildings in this area, and gives views of downtown, the Burrard Inlet, and the North Shore," he details. "With the low rises, there's a broader spectrum of housing affordability available because

of the wood-frame construction, and some people really like ground-oriented homes much better."



Ledingham McAllister's Escala to take a prominent position in a vibrant Burnaby neighbourhood
Page F6



Accessible luxury is key at Escala

Grey and white tones are on trend right now with what's happening out there ... CYNTHIA FLORANO, interior designer



This show suite kitchen has an island that's ideal for both prep work and storage. Stainless steel appliances make for a contemporary look.



Escala will have extensive amenities, including an indoor swimming pool, billiard tables, steam and sauna rooms, a hot tub, yoga or dance studio, and a sizable gym.

The sales centre has two show suites for viewing, so prospective purchasers can get a sense of the design differences of the homes in each building type, as well as of the two colour schemes available.

The highrise home demonstrates attention to both luxurious materials and low-maintenance living.

"Grey and white tones are on trend right now with what's happening out there — the grey stone of the countertops and all that glossy white material of the kitchen cabinetry add to the richness," explains Cynthia Florano, principal of Cynthia Florano Design. "We used large-format tiles in a marble effect for the bathrooms because they look classic and timeless, and are easy to take care of."

Rather than a breakfast bar, the design in the show suite calls for a kitch-

en island. It creates additional opportunities for storage space, as well as allowing for better traffic flow when entertaining at home. Stainless steel appliances complete the contemporary look.

Digital mock-ups illustrate the tremendous views from the floorto-ceiling windows and the balcony, while full-sized furniture fits easily in the bedrooms; that includes a king-sized bed and side tables in the master, and a queensized bed and side tables in the second bedroom. The carpeted floors in the bedrooms can be upgraded to wide-plank flooring in a smoked oak throughout the suite.

The low-rise show home displays a slate-like dark grey large format tile for bathroom floors, chocolate brown millwork, burnt caramel floors, and more stone and tile in shades of cream. Stainless steel appliances are also deployed here.

Wong says nearly 3,000 people have registered their interest in the more than 500 homes available at Escala. They include young professionals, first-time buyers, and empty nesters from the surrounding area, downtown Vancouver, East Vancouver along the Kingsway corridor, and the Tri-Cities. There has also been interest from investors who see great potential in the proximity to Simon Fraser University.

The development is walking distance to Gilmore SkyTrain station, which makes commuting both eastward and westward simple. The ongoing development around Brentwood Town Centre also means a rapidly expanding list of accessible community amenities, like grocery shopping, banking, restaurants and entertainment, and recreational facilities.

With other sizable projects already complete or upcoming in Burnaby, Wong says buyers know they can trust the quality of a Ledingham McAllister project. In fact, he reports much of the interest in the homes at Escala is coming from previous purchasers of the developer. That includes buyers from LedMac's

Aviara, which was completed in the fall. Wong says those consumers have already benefited from seeing the potential in the neighbourhood early, with increases in value of \$80 to \$125 per square foot since their original purchases in 2012.

"We see that same potential with the homes for Escala," Wong points out. "This is truly accessible luxury."