


# MASTER PLANNED LIFESTYLES

## PART ONE: *The Olympic Legacy*

— by Susan M Boyce —



Sun's shining, leaves are turning orange and there's a crispness in the ocean breeze. Cyclists zip along the seawall while a silver-haired gent passes a dazzling bouquet of flowers to his ladyfriend sitting on her patio. In the central piazza, a lanky guitarist sporting a racy, yellow and electric-blue cap is engaged in friendly, musical dueling with a drummer. Spontaneously, a couple begin to dance.

All in all, a typical Saturday afternoon at The Village. That would be the Olympic Village. Now officially renamed Millennium Water, this master planned community on Vancouver's False Creek waterfront continues its rapid evolution as the neighbourhood of choice for people looking for something different when it comes to the place they call home.

And whether you choose to call it innovative, visionary or just

plan spectacular, there's no question this is a neighbourhood with vibe and attitude. It's also a neighbourhood that's unique in plenty of other ways.

### **A NEW URBANISM**

From the beginning, Millennium Water was all about a new type of city lifestyle: a combination of higher density, lower environmental footprint, and outstanding livability. "We wanted to design a village that was not only spectacular, but spectacularly creative," says Hank Jasper, Millennium Group's general manager of development and construction.

"Millennium Water was an opportunity to reinvent urbanism," adds Scot Hien, senior urban designer with the City of Vancouver. "We wanted to break away from the idea of

singular, relentlessly homogenous super-buildings and create 'mini blocks' that each express individuality and architectural complexity. It was a premeditated strategy to allow the three architectural companies to work distinct from one another, thus creating three distinct neighbourhoods."

Historical references are subtly intertwined with the very fabric of life here. There's the pedestrian bridge designed in the shape of an abstract canoe, the giant nautical cleats, and the arched paving stone inlays echoing the patterns seen on loft floors of shipbuilding houses in centuries past. Look closely at the central plaza lighting, and you'll see the crimson stanchions are actually the cross-section of a ship tilted on its side, its ribs now half buried in the ground.

#### AGAINST THE CLOCK

But most astonishing of all, is the fact this master planned community was built in just three short years from the time the first spade hit the ground. "That's 1.5 million square feet in just 36 months," Jasper says. "Our City in-the-Park development in Burnaby took more than 10 years to complete. Concord Pacific's Expo lands have been under development for over 25 years and they're still not complete. This was like having eight separate projects running all at the same time – the logistics were staggering."

"Building a community of more than 1,000 homes in one phase has never been done before and will never be done again," adds Bob Rennie, who spearheaded Millennium Water's marketing campaign from day one. "Society today tends to be look for instant gratification. It's easy to forget that just as the economy started to come back, the Olympics arrived. And it's easy to forget it was only six months ago that VANOC handed back the keys to the village. If you're going to compare apples to oranges, sure you might buy the oranges. But other projects are comparing themselves to the Olympic Village for a reason."

#### COMMUNITY EVOLUTION

"Everything is getting very exciting now that people are moving in," says Annie Moore, a realtor with Prudential Realty West Vancouver. "My boyfriend and I were the second people to move in, so we've really seen the place come alive. Although she confesses that initially she wondered about relocating from downtown, she's had not a moment of regret. "We have a great view of the city, it's a five-minute cab ride to downtown or the AquaBus is right here, and once all the fun stores and restaurants start opening, it's going to be even better. It's like the best of both worlds."

She's not the only one who thinks so either. "Millennium Water is an example of what good planning can achieve," says Senator Larry Campbell, who also purchased a home here. "Being North America's largest LEED Platinum neighbourhood speaks to the commitment of the city and the developer to building sustainable communities. I believe it's a place that will grow to maturity with the Salt Building and Creekside Community Centre acting as anchors. When London Drugs and Urban Fare complete, we will see a blossoming much like Yaletown in its infancy. I bought here to live and God willing, I'll be here fifteen years from now and expect to pass this home on to my son."

Be sure to join us next issue when we take a closer look at some of the other outstanding master planned communities that have developed more traditionally across the Lower Mainland.



Senator Larry Campbell in front of the Salt Building in the heart of Millennium Water. (Photo courtesy of Jonathan Cruz)