

How green was my valet parking

BY HADANI DITMARS

If Olympic cities had official colours, Vancouver's in 2010 would certainly be green.

Aiming to host the eco-friendliest Games ever, municipal and Olympic planners there are adopting such environmentally conscious measures as reusing rainwater at the Richmond Oval and composting wood waste at the Whistler Nordic Competition Venue.

Then there's Millennium Water, the proposed eco-neighbourhood in the city's Southeast False Creek area and site of the athletes' residences. Set for completion in October of next year, the 1,100 or so units in numerous mixed-use buildings will not only be models of sustainability, but will also be the first Olympic residences to go on the market once the Games are over.

Already, first-phase units are almost sold out, project marketer Bob Rennie says. Three more phases are scheduled to go on sale over the next several months.

Prices for the apartments start at \$450,000 for a studio and peak at around \$3.4-million for a luxury penthouse. A wide range of eco-friendly features are being touted to prospective buyers, from green



After housing Olympic athletes during the 2010 Games in Vancouver, 1,100 units at the Millennium Water complex will be sold to the public.

roofs and non-toxic building materials to water-saving dual-flush toilets.

"Green is the new black," Rennie quips, alluding to the apparent popularity of the development, which is also slated to include 250 subsidized social-housing units for low-income families and seniors.

Designed by a number of local architects, including Gomboroff Bell Lyon, Lawrence Doyle/Young + Wright, Rob-

ert Ciccozzi Architecture Inc. and Arthur Erickson with Nick Milkovich and Larry Doyle, the various buildings on the 16-acre site are intended to be as attractive as they are eco-friendly.

"We didn't want to compromise the look of the project just because it was green," says Adele Rankin of Co-ordinated Hotel Interiors Ltd., the firm responsible for the interiors. "And in the end we didn't

have to."

Rachel Moscovich of Merrick Architecture, which designed nine of the proposed residential buildings on the site, says the design and construction industries have finally caught up with consumer demand.

"It used to be the case that if you wanted to use green materials, your choices were very limited," she says. "But now manufacturers say, 'What do you want?'"

In one of Millennium Water's sleek model suites, the array of materials and fixtures reflects the breadth of today's eco-offerings.

In the kitchen and living areas, for instance, the handsome hardwood flooring was certified as sustainably harvested by the Forest Stewardship Council, while the coiled polished-chrome kitchen faucet is so stylish you would never guess it was low-flow.

It is nice to know, though, that the limestone flooring in the bathroom and wool carpeting in the bedrooms do not emit toxins. Likewise for the just-so shade of taupe wall paint, which is free of VOCs (volatile organic compounds).

Perhaps most spectacularly, the curvilinear 167-square-foot balcony extends the whole width of this particular suite, which also features bedroom windows that open (a rarity in many condo towers) to let in fresh air.

Each of the suites in Millennium Water will also contain a PowerTab, a device invented by a clever pod of University of British Columbia graduates to monitor energy use right down to the penny.

If you exceed your set conservation goal, a red strip on the PowerTab lights up. If you meet it, you get a green light.

"It was a steep learning curve for me," Rennie says of Millennium Water's eco-culture. "But ultimately 'green' is a good investment for buyers and also means better resale value."

And if sustainability isn't incentive enough, there is the added and unique allure of having had a champion skier or figure skater bed down in your home.

» Special to *The Globe and Mail*