



Prime On The Plaza

by LAURIE JONES

Towering over the streets of Surrey, B.C., the 37-storey, 398-unit Prime on the Plaza mixed-use residential building sets an example for the new lifestyle choice of minimalist living. With suites ranging from 288-square-foot micro-units to 1,036-square-foot townhomes, the variety of options will suit a wide demographic of buyers.

A combined effort in development from Reliance Properties Ltd. and Macdonald Development Corporation (now Macdonald Communities Ltd.), the project has many layers of expertise. “I took over the file for our half of the Prime on the Plaza partnership with Reliance Properties after we had broken ground,” says John Macdonald, COO. “The project is the brainchild of Jon Stovell of Reliance and our [Macdonald’s] late partner Bob Glass who worked together to conceive of, design, and presell the tower. Jon Stovell is a real visionary and it has been a pleasure working with him on this project. Our version of micro suites adds a lot of complexity to construction, but allows us to pack an immense amount of utility into each square foot. I am confident our customers will be very pleased with the end result.”

Doug Nelson, associate, Bingham Hill Architects says this was a focused micro-unit project with deliberate compact design that includes luxurious features. “City Hall and SFU [Simon Fraser University] are across the street so these suites could be beneficial for people who live in outer parts of Metro Vancouver but need a city apartment for work or education reasons. The

studio layouts represent just over 50 percent of the 398 units in the building.

“When the properties were released for sale, the owners realized that there was a higher demand for smaller units. The more traditional units, like a corner two-bedroom suite, were selling, but at a slower rate. Because of that, design plans were revised for the unsold upper 10 storeys of the building and more units were added. Even units that were intended to be a standard two-bedroom apartment were redesigned to be a micro three-bedroom apartment.” Most units have a standard bathroom but the kitchens are more compact and Murphy beds offer double duty with a fold-out dining or study table.

With such tight quarters, Prime on the Plaza has a number of amenities for socializing within the building including a fully equipped gym, sauna and steam rooms, a yoga room and study areas.

With such a tall structure, and the unique twist on the upper floors, several considerations were needed beyond the standard frame. Mike Carlaw, senior project manager at Metro-Can Construction Ltd. says, “There was a two-foot-thick transfer slab on level 27 to accommodate new columns and wall locations to transfer loads from the upper tower to the lower tower. To form and support level 39’s perimeter beam, there were fly tables stacked for three levels below as parts of the perimeter beam had nothing under them for 38 floors. Parts of the beam projected past level 38 to the ground floor.” He adds that for the window wall installation



for views on level 38, they added wind screen for the roof terrace to guard against high winds.

The interior design was a major factor in creating comfortable living spaces in the downsized units. “Because they are so small, we kept the colour palette as neutral as possible,” says Andrea Finlay, principal,

Studio Finlay. “The windows are massive so essentially the view is the artwork for the suite.”

She adds that because each area also has two modalities – a living area or dining/kitchen – the design ensured people didn’t feel they were in the kitchen the whole time, including when they are sleeping. “Twenty-four-inch

appliances were used and the sight-lines were kept as clean as possible with millwork cabinetry that hides the fridge and dishwasher. The upper cabinets have flat panels and no pulls so visually they become part of the wall. The lower part of the kitchen can be a buffet or credenza, which would look more like a piece of furniture than part of a kitchen. There are also entertainment rooms that can be booked for a dinner with up to 10 people. It feels like an extension of the home.”

A unique twist on the design of the top 10 floors was inspired by a famous painting seen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. “Kazimir Malevich’s White on White painting done in 1918 shows a skewed square, and a concept of that painting was designed into the concrete on the side of the building,” says Neil Wilson, associate, Glotman Simpson Consulting Engineers.

The lighting for security purposes is always a consideration in residential towers, and on all the parking levels occupancy sensors are installed for motion detection. “The lights go down up to 70 percent to reduce energy consumption when there is no activity, and up to 100 percent when motion is detected with cars or people,” says Ovidiu Cojocaru, associate, Nemetz



(S/A) & Associates Ltd. “This is a standard regulations in all municipalities.” Security is another significant aspect of the building, with entry fobs for the perimeter doors.

Even though the project was built on a tight footprint, landscaping was still an important factor. “On the ground floor we installed a nice plaza along the main road, and we have an allée of trees to create a nice pedestrian

environment with benches,” says Stephen Vincent, partner, Durante Kreuk Ltd. “We also concentrated on details for the townhouses in front of the building, and as Surrey is promoting birds in the city, we added stylized bird cut outs for décor.”

Vincent notes the amenities include large outdoor spaces and a play area. A grassed area on level two includes an outdoor barbecue. “On the top floor

amenity section we designed a quiet, landscaped area with perennials to create a garden feel. Overall, we did a simple design with high quality materials. Given the fact that a lot of the units are small, I think there will be a higher use of outdoor spaces.” **A**

LOCATION

13438 Central Avenue, Surrey, B.C.

OWNER/DEVELOPER

Reliance Properties Ltd. /
Macdonald Communities Ltd.

PROJECT MANAGER

Turnbull Construction Project Managers Ltd.

ARCHITECT

Bingham Hill Architects

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Metro-Can Construction Ltd.

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

Glotman Simpson Consulting Engineers

MECHANICAL CONSULTANT

MCW Consultants Ltd.

ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Nemetz (S/A) & Associates Ltd.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Durante Kreuk Ltd.

INTERIOR DESIGN

Studio Finlay

TOTAL SIZE

265,000 square feet

TOTAL COST

\$90 million