

Luxury living alternatives on the rise in Victoria

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It doesn't much matter which direction you look, Victoria has opportunities for buyers looking for recreational property or even a retirement home. Condo projects of all sizes, shapes and luxuries are springing up — and Albertans are buying, say developers. Here's a partial list of some of the bigger projects for sale in Victoria.

Aria

A contemporary, sleek condo on the backside of the famous Fairmont Empress Hotel in the heart of downtown Victoria, Aria is being built by Alpha Project Developments. Two 12-storey towers, Bravo and Encore, will be joined by a stepped four- to seven-storey building that will be home to 174 luxury suites rising near the historic Empress Hotel and Crystal Gardens. The exterior will be finished in brick and concrete with low E-glazed windows. Recessed corner balconies are designed to take advantage of the surrounding parks and waterfront. The main entrance lobby will be located among residential amenity and commercial spaces. Pedestrian walkways and a promenade provide easy access to nearby amenities. Visit www.ariavictoria.com.

Bayview Luxury Condominiums

Located in the heart of Victoria, on the hilltop overlooking the harbour, Bayview Luxury Condominiums is a \$1.5-billion, mixed-use development. The extensive project is being built by Bayview Properties Ltd., which includes principal owner Ken Mariash and his wife, Patricia. It's the last five-star location available on the southwest facing the inner harbour of Victoria. It's adjacent to the 0.72-hectare Hillside Songhees Park in the Victoria West area. The site will contain condominium apartment towers, townhouses and a private owners' clubhouse with lap pool, fitness centre, tennis, squash and racquetball courts, a spa and cafe. It will also involve the restoration of some historical buildings on site.

The first phase consists of three residential condo towers with 400 homes in total. Construction has started and the first tower is to be 11 storeys with one-to-three bedroom units as well as townhomes. Half of the 130 units in the first phase have sold already, with mostly the higher-end units going first, says Mariash. Prices range from \$400,000 to as much as \$3 million. The second phase will have five or six more buildings around the historic Railway Roundhouse site. For more information, visit www.bayviewvictoria.com.

The Breakwater

Three Point Properties is in the midst of redeveloping a historical site that's just a stone's throw from the Ogden Point breakwater. With 19 brick-wrapped townhouses, measuring more than 2,000 square feet and priced from \$799,000 to \$1.2 million, The Breakwater is being built on a site that housed Victoria's original immigration quarantine buildings, which were demolished in 1977. The site offers views of Juan de Fuca Strait and is a short walk from the inner harbour, Fishermen's Wharf, James Bay and Beacon Hill Park.



The second phase of Docksider Green, Balance, is now selling.

With a show home set to open in May, and with a half-dozen sales in the books, Carleson expects possessions to begin in July and August. For more information, visit www.thebreakwater.ca.

Chelsea

The Chelsea is a luxury low-rise apartment complex that consists of all-concrete construction located in the established neighbourhood of Fairfield. It is being developed by Concert Real Estate Corporation. The website, www.ChelseaVictoria.com, says suites range in size from 964 to 1,944 square feet and are priced from \$525,000 to \$1.65 million.

Just 66 residences are in the project, which is now under development with a completion date in fall 2008. A stroll in one direction will take buyers to the popular Cook Street Village area. A little further along, you'll find yourself at the ocean's edge, above the bluffs and rugged beaches that skirt scenic Dallas Road. Nearby is Beacon Hill Park — a tranquil, green, natural and abundant area, with gardens and paths or trails to run, ride or walk along.

The Cherry Bank

This development is only blocks from the inner harbour in the historic Cathedral Hill neighbourhood. It stands on the site of the former Cherry Bank Hotel and it will have 51 boutique, high-end residences. Developed by Denford Construction Management Ltd., each of The Cherry Bank's 51 residences has a unique floor plan designed to make the most of each unit's location in the building. Each one is filled with bright, natural daylight from oversized windows and offers outstanding security and comfort. They come in one- and two-bedroom floor plans on one and two levels. Some highlights of the residences include:

- ▶ An Ice Box nerve centre: This built-in screen flips down to reveal a command centre for wired-in digital services, including in-suite communication, Internet, and video that allows the custom control of lighting, automatic blinds and surround-sound home theatre.
- ▶ An array of green initiatives, including energy efficient construction technology, low E glazing, dual flush toilets, and interior paints with low VOC (volatile organic compound) content. For more information, check the website at www.cherrybank.ca.



Docksider Green rendering.

Docksider Green

This project is in the same neighbourhood as that of the Bayside project — north of Johnson Bridge just off Tye Road — and it covers six hectares of inner harbour land.

The Windmill Development Group project has already garnered international attention for its green building practices, construction, housing components and techniques. The first phase, Synergy, consisted of two buildings. All units are sold, with 26 per cent of the buyers from Alberta, says Windmill president Joe Van Belleghem.

Construction has started on the first phase, with the first people expected to move in by December. The second phase is Balance, consisting of two buildings. The first building has 90 units and is currently 60-per-cent sold. Units are priced from \$280,900 to \$1.2 million.

The second building will have 81 units, for a combined 1,000 units with Docksider Green, when completed. For more information, visit www.docksidergreen.ca.

Juliet

This project is on the site of the old Romeo's Pizza parlour, a renowned downtown Victoria site that's been closed for several years. The first phase sold out the day it opened and construction has started on a 96-unit, 15-storey tower. The whole condominium is currently almost half sold, including the larger penthouse units.

Along with local buyers, purchasers come from Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver, says Dave Chard of Chard Development Ltd. The complex includes a SkyTerrace rooftop garden and barbecue area, with a private outdoor movie theatre for residents.

The area also has an outdoor kitchen area and hot tub, as well as green space. The suites are priced from \$264,900 to nearly \$1 million for the penthouse unit that's still available. For more information, visit www.julietliving.com.

Richmond Gate

The development is close to the University of Victoria in the Oak Bay area. Because of its location, it is drawing some of the younger crowd, says Gaby.

"Some people from out of town are buying and their kids are using the homes while they are at the university," he says. Still, a number of "downsizers" are buying, says Gaby.

"It's convenient to the highway and ferry or airport, there are three to five golf courses in the area, and it's five minutes to the ocean," he says. "As well, prices are more attractive than they are downtown."

The complex consists of 48 suites in two buildings, plus six townhouses and it's about 60-per-cent sold. Prices range from \$339,000 to \$469,000 for the apartment units, and \$639,000 for the townhouses. The developer is Richmond Gate Properties, a partnership of Homewood Construction Ltd. and Magellan Holdings Ltd. Check out the website at www.richmondgatevictoria.com.

CanWest News Service



VICTORIA TIMES COLONIST, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
Sod turning Nov. 6, 2006, for The Falls condominium project

The Falls

The development involves a grand-looking highrise condo tower that has what looks like a single, cascading waterfall running down the side of the building. It appears to drop 100 feet from the 19th floor to the ground, but there are really a series of smaller falls that make up the whole.

The project consists of two towers developed by luxury residential developer Westbank with architect James Cheng — the team behind such projects as the Fairmont Pacific Rim and Living Shangri-La in Vancouver. The Falls will be built directly behind the Fairmont Empress hotel so location is premium. The first floor will consist of retail space.

Construction has started, with the first move-ins slated for spring 2009. The project includes such amenities as an outdoor pool, lush landscaping, select suites with outdoor fireplaces on terraces, and an in-house fitness centre and amenity room. A total of 155 one- to three-bedroom suites will cover 18 terraced floors. They are 70-per-cent sold out, says Peter Gaby, who heads up sales for The Falls.

"The Calgary market has been very good, with roughly a two-to-one split between Edmonton and Calgary for approximately 40 per cent of the sales," he says.

Prices are from \$389,000 to \$2.5 million. Four two-level penthouses are at the top. For more information, visit www.thefallsvictoria.com.

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