

# finishings

## Decadence is there for the taking

**W**ith Calgary's ever-rising condo prices, homebuyers want developers to bring their A-game — not only when it comes to building design, but also to the fine details in every suite.

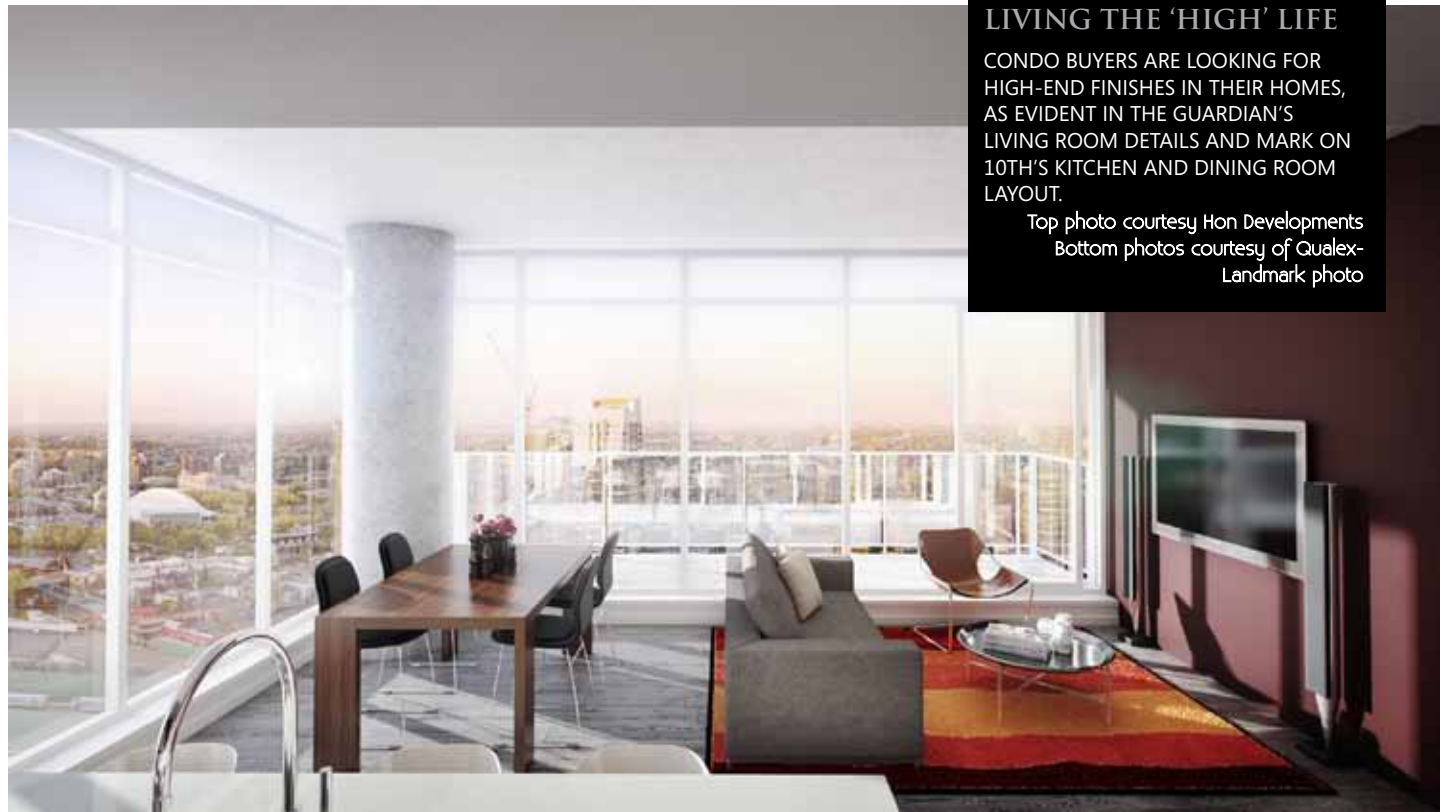
"People are more aware and educated — it's so easy to google ideas," says interior designer Monica Stevens. "There's so much out there that they're visually ingesting — if it's there, you want it."

And what do homebuyers want? "They might have been doing granite countertops forever, but they're still popular," says Stevens. "A variety of different materials such as Caesarstone — anything that has a natural quality to it. And there are many accessories that even go with the sink now — cutting boards and the like."

Stevens says some finishes are influenced by the move towards more traditional design, thanks in part to new condo developments in older inner-city areas. "Vintage-modern is very popular," she says.

The desire for more value for money has also driven the demand for high-end finishes, says Parham Mahboubi, vice-president, marketing and new developments with Vancouver-based Qualex-Landmark, which is building the MARK on 10th project south of downtown.

"We have found that homebuyers want great value for their investment dollars," he says. "That doesn't translate into cutting corners on the interior finishes, it means being smarter about the interiors. What this really means



### LIVING THE 'HIGH' LIFE

CONDO BUYERS ARE LOOKING FOR HIGH-END FINISHES IN THEIR HOMES, AS EVIDENT IN THE GUARDIAN'S LIVING ROOM DETAILS AND MARK ON 10TH'S KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM LAYOUT.

Top photo courtesy Hon Developments

Bottom photos courtesy of Qualex-Landmark photo



is that homebuyers will do extensive research and shop all developments and then will choose the product that they feel gives them the best value for their dollar.

"Some of the specs include stone countertops, quality cabinets, flooring type — usually something other than just carpet — and great appliances. These have to be married with a great floor plan to make a smaller space feel much larger through an efficient use of the space."

High-end cabinets have become a go-to finish of choice for many buyers, says Ernest Hon, director of marketing and sales with Hon Developments, which is building The Guardian.

"If you look at newer condo projects, you're seeing higher-quality finishes in custom cabinetry and that wasn't the case in the past," he says. "In terms of other finishes, there is demand for engineered hardwoods or high-end laminates. But custom cabinets —



upgrade packages for TV cabinets or bedroom storage upgrades designed and built in Italy and imported here, and it's a popular option.

"Functionality is very important."

In terms of high-end condo finishes, Calgary is at par with Toronto, says Fred Serrafiero, vice-president of development with FRAM Building Group, which (as part of the FRAM+Slokker partnership) is developing several buildings in East Village, including the newly launched Verve.

"To a certain level, the majority

of downtown Beltline condo specs and finishes are better than most downtown Toronto condos," Serrafiero says, echoing Hon that functionality is as important as esthetics.

"You're pushing the envelope to create esthetically pleasing kitchens, but ones that are also very functional, especially in a condo where space is at a premium," he says.

High-end countertop surfaces such as quartzite and Corian are also gaining traction, Serrafiero adds.

■ Alex Frazer-Harrison