

# 10 tips for condo hunters

By Jordan Beach

Calgary's Beltline population grew by 1,091 residents from April 2013-14 to 21,357 (*Source: The 2014 Civic Census*). The inner-city densification is creating an attractive urban lifestyle and condo living is a fantastic, care-free option that caters to it. Here are 10 tips to make your condo purchase a success:

**#1 Work with a realtor.** This professional will represent your best interests. However, whether or not you work with a realtor should not matter to the developer. A good and fair developer will always ensure that the purchase price remains the same, whether or not you have representation.

**#2 Seek solid track records.** In 2008, many homebuyers had their deposits returned after a number of residential highrise projects were abandoned due to the global financial crisis. The experienced developers were the ones who honoured their contracts. Buy from a developer with a solid track record – in all market conditions.

**#3 Do your homework.** When researching a condominium project, learn about the developer, their experience, and what others have to say. This information can be found in the form of testimonials or articles, and is usually available on developers' websites, offering insight into a developer's reputation in the marketplace and their achievements.

**#4 Ask questions.** Properly trained sales staff should provide you with enough information to help you make an intelligent buying decision. You should never feel pressured or forced. The sales team should explain the pre-construction sales and possession processes, as they are quite different from buying a resale unit.

**#5 Get to know the warranty program.** On Feb. 1, 2014 the Alberta government introduced plans for mandatory warranty protection for new-home buyers. The new legislation stipulates, "all new homes must include warranty coverage of one year for labour and materials,

two years for delivery and distribution systems, five years for building envelope protection and 10 years for major structural components." This will ensure that owners do not get big cash calls to fix deficiencies in new homes.

**#6 Know your price range.** Meet with a mortgage lender to get a pre-approved mortgage before you start shopping. Know how much you have available for a down payment. If 20 per cent or more, you have greater flexibility with amortization. Discuss this thoroughly with your mortgage broker. Some developers will partner with lenders to offer guaranteed rates right up until completion.

**#7 Get it in writing.** If the builder has promised you something, ensure it's included in the contract. Your unit may not be ready for a few years and verbal agreements could be missed during the construction process.

**#8 Explore the neighbourhood.** Be clear about which amenities are priorities. Take a walk, check out local shops and services, transportation options, and how it all suits your lifestyle. Condo living in Calgary's urban centres has gained much attention in the last decade for the convenience and lifestyle that it offers, whether to live, work, play, socialize, shop and more.

**#9 Understand this: pre-construction sales don't have a definitive possession date.** The developer will have an estimated building completion date. It's important that homebuyers not confuse the completion date with the possession date. Once the building is complete, the developer must then apply for an Occupancy Permit and file it with the Land Title Office, which can take an additional two to three weeks.

**#10 Understand the closing process.** Being aware of and preparing for this process will help alleviate stress during this important time.

Jordan Beach is vice-president of sales and service for the Qualex-Landmark Group of Companies. [qualex.ca](http://qualex.ca)