

NEW CONDOS

LIVING LARGE IN RADIUM

Get outdoors at Bighorn **G13-14**



FITNESS WITH FUN

New local trend
emerging **G15**

CALGARY HERALD SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2015 SECTION G



Kelly Code relaxes in the work space of her live-work unit at The Block by Avi Urban. The landscape architect said she saw the location as a good fit for her business. **MICHELLE HOFER**

NICHE UNITS FOR LIVE-WORK LIFE

Locales cater to different pace of business owners

JOSH SKAPIN
CALGARY HERALD

The shopkeeper with private living quarters above his corner store may have been on the right track. In an age where smartphones put the connection to professional life just a reach-in-the-pocket away, live-work units are an emerging trend for Calgary's inner city. Some new builds near the city core with live-work options on tap include Verve by FRAM + Slokker in East Village, The Guardian and Park Point.

"The trend in Calgary is starting to shift," says Parham Mahboubi, vice-president of Qualex-Landmark, Park Point's developer. "There are many factors, such as traffic, convenience, the ability to have your own work hours. It's a different lifestyle. More and more companies these days are looking for employees to work from home on occasion to reduce their commute time, so there are efficiencies, tax advantages, there are multiple angles you can look at it from."

SEE BLOCK ON **G4**

'Size, types of spaces are critical'

BLOCK FROM G1

Park Point is a 34-storey skyscraper in the historic Beltline district. It brought eight live-work townhouses to the market earlier this year, starting from the \$680,000s. They include two bedrooms on the second floor and a work space on the main. Total sizes range from 1,025 to 1,300 square feet. At press time, two have been sold.

In many cases, a live-work unit has a defined office space with the opportunity for professional signage on the main level, with the second and third floors dedicated to a traditional townhouse floor plan. "I think that's where that entrepreneurial mentality comes into the picture," says Mahboubi. "Maybe



Charron Ungar

they're thinking I'll buy the live-work today, to live, with the possibility of, or anticipation of, setting up their own business. Maybe as a consultant, maybe as a freelance journalist. There are many different types of businesses that could work from home."

Kelly Code saw it as a good fit for her business. She bought at the Block by Avi Urban last August, a boutique complex off 17th Avenue S.W., completed in 2014.

"My real estate agent said there was a possibility at the Block and that she would be running her real estate business from it," Code says. "I'm a landscape architect, so it's just easy to do. I don't need a lot of equipment to work from home."

She's been in the landscape architecture business for around 20 years and has had her own company for the past two. While Code doesn't have clients come to her home office for meetings, she says her live-work

unit offers that potential.

"A lot of my work is on the computer, doing drawing and research and using the Internet. Most of my clients I visit on site because you need to look at the site," Code says. "But if they wanted to come to my office, they could."

But the Block wasn't Avi Urban's first step into the live-work realm. The multi-family builder brought on what's believed to be the city's first look at the segment with a development in Bridgeland.

"To the best of my knowledge Olive was the first purpose-built multi-family development incorporating live-work homes within its product mix," says Avi Urban president Charron Ungar. "We worked quite closely with the city in developing a clearer definition on live-work product."

Avi Urban also teamed up with Sturgess Architecture, ensuring the development had flexible living and working spaces, and was also esthetically pleasing. But Olive's live-work options weren't an overnight success.

"The response was great for typical multi-family product but our live-work struggled," Ungar says. "The public had considerable trouble accepting the value statement for live-work townhouses."

"Only once we started moving away from traditional messaging and advertising used for residential homes and began experimenting with working with business-related marketing sources were we able to attract buyers."

It soon caught on as a positive lifestyle choice that made financial sense, turning many buyers away from office towers and toward a work space they could call their own, says Ungar.

"Architects, doctors, wedding planners, web designers and financial advisers all made the leap. We quickly sold out and the rest is history," he adds.

Ungar since brought live-work townhouses to the community of Currie Barracks and says the company will look for future opportunities to bring the segment into its product mix. In terms of what makes a live-work floor plan a win-



The Olive condo development is believed to be "the first purpose-built multi-family development incorporating live-work homes within its product mix," says Home by Avi's Charron Ungar. CLAIRE YOUNG/CALGARY HERALD

ner, Ungar points to flexibility.

"The needs of businesses vary greatly when it comes to space," he says. "The size and types of spaces are critical. For example, a doctor or financial adviser's office might need smaller private spaces, while an architect or web designer would prefer wide open collaborative space. We also dealt with storage issues and access requirements. Material finishes were important, as was durability. It was a balance between ensuring a warm inviting space in which to live, with a professional efficient place conducive to business."

Hon Towers is another believer in live-work, adding 10 of these units to the street front of The Guardian. This two-tower development in Victoria Park is set to offer the tallest residential structures in Calgary. "I think the live-work unit is definitely a great thing to see in the city," says Ernest Hon of Hon Towers.

"As the urban streetscape continues to develop in the Beltline, these types of units will become increasingly popular. The live-work units also contribute to a lively pedestrian realm."

Putting pen to paper on a live-work design, Hon echoes Ungar's comments on the need for flexibility. "For some of the units that we designed in the Guardian, the open mezzanine level acts like a second-floor bedroom, while the lower level has an open floor plan for work purposes. We imagine it could make a great photo studio, artist's gallery, meeting space," says Hon. "I think these units are attractive to many types of people."



Ernest Hon with Hon Towers is also a believer in the rise of live-work units.