



It's better **TOGETHER**

Shared platforms offer richer living

Urbanization brings rewards such as being able to walk to work, have entertainment within the community and share amenities from parks to condo gyms.
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Whether it's a communal vegetable garden, outdoor terraces with benches and barbecues or a bicycle sharing program, savvy real estate developers are taking a special look at shared living platforms.

"It's not a new concept. 'Global living' cities like New York, Chicago, Toronto and Vancouver have been doing this for years," says Robert Duteau, senior vice-president of development at Grosvenor, a multi-national global real estate development company and the developer behind the successful Drake, Smith and Avenue West End projects in Calgary.

Certainly the city is on the cusp of change, embracing more sharing economy platforms that will lead to collaborative, sustainable, connected and economically resilient way of living. Concepts like Car2Go, a shared car service, and Airbnb, a shared home rental service, are just the beginning. The sharing economy is sprouting up everywhere – crowd funding, peer-to-peer lending, garden sharing and seed swaps.

And here, it's fuelled by millennial thinking — Calgary has the second youngest population in a large Canadian city, just behind Edmonton's. According to a recent study produced by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, as much as 40 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 actively participate in a sharing economy.

"The concept of a shared lifestyle is just something that I grew up with," says 23-year-old Anna Mackay, who moved to Calgary six years ago from Vancouver to attend university and ended up staying.

Vancouver has embraced the sharing economy for decades, and Calgary is headed in the same direction.

"These trends of urbanization have been occurring for years, driven by different economic fundamentals. Now young people here are making those same kinds of decisions — they don't want to commute, they want to walk, they want to live close to their friends and the gym, live mostly a car-free lifestyle," says Duteau.

And then he asks the quintessential

question. "Who wants to spend 45 minutes in a car commuting?" And that is definitely one of the questions driving the trend toward urbanization.

The car-free lifestyle is exactly the kind of lifestyle that Mackay was looking for when she began her home search in January of 2015. She wanted to purchase a home in a beautiful, well-designed and forward-thinking condominium project that incorporated a bevy of shared amenities. At the top of her must-have list was location. It had to be within walking distance of her downtown office, yet close to all of the great restaurants and coffee shops on 17th Avenue.

Shared amenities and entertainment spaces create a larger living space.

When she came across Smith, off 17th Avenue, Mackay knew it was for her. "I really liked the layout of the one-bedroom plans, and the shared amenities were a real perk."

Smith offers a parkside location, shared outdoor landscaped terraces with barbecue areas, shared entertainment spaces, a 24-hour concierge service, a bike-share and a tool-share program.

"Shared amenities and entertainment spaces create a larger living space. In condo living every square foot counts, so having a bike share, having parks nearby really adds," says Duteau.

Certainly Mackay agrees. "Because living is becoming more condensed, it is so nice to be able to have a space to go outside — from the parks to the terraces. There is just so much green space around Smith."

But although the shared lifestyle may have started with the millennials, interest has trickled into every corner of the city, touching every demographic. Gen Xers and baby boomers are propelling the concept further.

Qualex-Landmark, an award-winning

Vancouver-based developer that has built six projects in Calgary's Beltline area, has found the sweet spot when it comes to creating shared amenities.

Its latest Calgary project, Park Point, offers a multitude of first-class shared amenities and a selection of stunning homes located next to Victorian gardens and the thriving boutiques and restaurants of the Beltline. The development has attracted interest from a spectrum of buyers, including those downsizing from large homes in the suburbs.

"We treat each project as if it is a custom tailored project. We carefully and thoughtfully tailor the design and scale of building amenities to the specific needs of the target demographic. Our decisions are tempered by the objective to introduce amenities that are timeless and will not become unappreciated or under-utilized over the long run," says Qualex-Landmark's president Mohammed Esfahani.

When it comes to the downsizer or baby boomer crowd, Esfahani says this crowd is of its own different mindset.

"These homebuyers are a savvy group and not in a rush to relocate until they have eliminated their fears and concerns to downsize and live in a more efficiently planned space where the amenities are shared with others in the building."

He says that this demographic is more socially oriented so "shared amenities in a building certainly have appeal, but to get to that point they have to fully investigate the idea of shared living since they generally do not make risky or erratic decisions."

Downsizers are turning to chic inner-city condo living, drawn by the walkable lifestyle, close to restaurants and shopping, the array of in-house amenities from roof top terraces to Pilates studios, as well as the convenience of being able to lock and leave.

Taking it a step further, forward-thinking developers in British Columbia are creating the ultimate-shared lifestyle aging in place real estate developments for discerning septa-, octo- and nonagenarians, chock-full of shared amenities from libraries, to gyms and entertaining spaces.

"This is really just the beginning of a whole new way of thinking and living," says Duteau.



Park Point, a Beltline development by Qualex-Landmark, will offer a shared gym facility and a rooftop Zen patio for residents to enjoy. COURTESY, QUALEX-LANDMARK