

Downsizers pare homes to the essentials: location, lifestyle and lots of storage



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FRAM + Slokker designed Verve's condos to make the living space liveable. *SUPPLIED / CALGARY HERALD*

While the empty-nester market is largely driven by home size and a low-maintenance lifestyle, it doesn't end there.

Factors that support a smooth transition to a smaller living space are top considerations for downsizers, says builders of apartment-style condos in the city.

A second parking stall, generous outdoor living areas, and large bedrooms are all high on the wish list for this buyer demographic, says Angie Herback, who works in sales for Remington Development. The builder is selling the Gates and Champagne condo developments in Quarry Park.

Ample storage is also key, she says.

"Because they currently live in a larger space, they have many belongings and keepsakes, some of which they are not ready to part with," Herback adds. "They realize they will have less storage space in a condo environment, but do not want to give it all up.

"Having the space to store items helps with the transition."

Herback says the storage idea extends to cabinets, linen closets and opportunities outside the unit itself, such as lockers in the underground heated parkade. At Champagne, these lockers start at 42 square feet.

Deb Pedersen has heard the same. She's director of sales for FRAM Building Group. FRAM+Slokker is the developer behind the First and Verve condo towers in East Village.

"Coming from a bigger place, they're thinking 'where am I going to put my stuff?'" says Pedersen. Lockers are again the answer. "You'll want to put in your golf equipment, ski equipment, your extra tires. The things that you would normally store in a garage, now you've got space for that in your storage areas."

But beyond that, Pedersen says the ticket, like with any buyer, is to offer something that's thoughtfully designed. If there's less space, use it well. "People are looking for a well-laid-out, spacious-feeling plan," Pedersen says.

"If you think in terms of how condos are built today versus older type condos, with all the glass it makes it feel a lot more spacious," she says,

adding open-concept layouts in newer condos add to that feeling, as well.

Vice-president of planning and marketing for Qualex-Landmark Parham Mahboubi also points to the importance of strong design.

“The interior space, building design and amenities need to exude a sense of quality, pride, class and ‘bragging rights,’ ” says Mahboubi. “They want to show off the building, the amenities, the upscale design of the suite, and the surrounding views.

“They want to be able to demonstrate that, by downsizing, they are actually upgrading their lifestyle and not compromising.”

Qualex-Landmark is now constructing and selling into condo tower Park Point, located in the city’s Beltline district.

“They want to know whether they can still host and entertain their guests or children who come to visit the way they used to when they lived in a larger single family home,” Mahboubi adds. “So the kitchen and living area needs to be both functional and strikingly beautiful. It needs to be open and bright.”

Size and use of windows don’t just extend the feeling of the condo, they all add to something downsizers appreciated about their single-family homes, says Jayman Modus sales manager Chuck Shields.

Jayman’s Overture development in Currie has seen a strong response from downsizers.

“One of the main things that we have been able to focus on is larger windows in our models,” Shields says. “Because coming from a (single-family home) that’s probably the biggest concern: How much light am I going to get?”

He says, while single-family homes can offer windows from four sides, apartment-style condos have to take a different approach.

“It’s all about the size and location,” he adds. “We all like the light. We’re drawn to it.”

With that said, Shields says the top priority for his downsizing buyers has been the bedroom count. Namely, the need for more than one.

“There’s a lot that we’ve sold to where, even though they don’t have a full-

time individual using that bedroom, they want the bedroom for when the grandkids come from out of town,” Shields says.

Not to be forgotten is the role of an appealing location. Pedersen says people moving to East Village may see a shift in their lifestyle.

“Instead of entertaining at home, I think they might go to all the local restaurants. I think you’re doing more entertaining or socializing outside of your home,” she says.

The revamped Simmons Building, National Music Centre and St. Patrick’s Island also give empty-nesters new ways to spend their evenings and weekends.

Mahboubi says Central Memorial Park, which is steps from Park Point, has been a “big seller” for the tower.

“It creates a great atmosphere that is serene and beautiful, which certainly appeals to the downsizing demographic.”

Calgary Flyers

The image displays four promotional flyers for Calgary-based retailers. Each flyer is shown in a perspective view, appearing to float above a white base that contains the retailer's logo. The flyers are:

- London Drugs:** Features the headline "HI-TECH SAVINGS!" and "LONDON DRUG". It promotes "Optik 4K. Intensity is here. Now only on Optik." and mentions "Savings Start Friday, July 22 - Wednesday, August 3, 2016".
- Visions Electronics:** Features the headline "EMERGENCY LIQUIDATION" and "ALL INVENTORY! ALL BRANDS! ALL PACKED TO SELL OUT FAST!". It includes various product prices and a "50/55" offer.
- The Home Depot:** Features the headline "10% OFF" and "NO INTEREST IF PAID IN FULL WITHIN 18 MONTHS". It promotes "More saving. More going." and lists items like paint and tools.
- PetSmart:** Features a photo of a dog and the headline "cloud star". It promotes "Aug 1-14" and shows a bag of Cloud Star dog food.

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