

BUYER PROFILE

WORTH THE WAIT

Buyer opts for a new-build condo in Calgary's desirable Beltline



ANDREA COX FOR CREB NOW

Nav Basi knows real estate: it's what he does for a living.

This 41-year-old entrepreneur and real estate investor lives just north of the city limits, on an acreage adjacent to Cross Iron Mills. He's young, single and considering shifting lifestyle gears, from country-living to inner-city hip.

With that in mind, he made the decision to purchase a one-bedroom condominium at Park Point, a 34-storey condominium tower close to the city's core, overlooking Memorial Park. He purchased for investment purposes and plans to rent it out with eye to potentially using it as a future residence for himself.

CREB NOW: WHY DID YOU BUY A NEW-BUILD VERSUS A REALESTATE CONDOMINIUM?

BASI: I initially began my search looking at resale condominiums. I started looking on the MLS System (REALTOR.ca). I did my research and I found a lot of older buildings and medium-rise buildings, with two-bedrooms, a lot of square footage and parking for around \$350,000 to \$400,000.

The challenge was that the condo fees were so expensive and the finishings were older and dated, even though you could get more value with a resale. It just wasn't worth paying the higher condo fees. So I started looking at new buildings.

CREB NOW: WHAT LED YOU TO THE PROJECT AT PARK POINT?

BASI: I wanted to buy a condo close to downtown or next to a TOD (Transit Oriented Development).

I started looking in Victoria Park and the East Village, but I couldn't find anything that I really liked. I went to Google and took a bird's eye view of the downtown core and thought the Beltline looked great. So I walked around and saw the pre-sale sign for Park Point. It was right across from Memorial Park, which was a real draw. Plus, it's located on 12th Avenue and Second Street - a block away from the Plus 15 system.

I went home and did some research and saw that the developer, Qualex-Landmark, had built five other projects in the city. The next day, I went down to the show suite. The finishings were extremely nice; top-notch. The condo fees were quite low and yet all of the amenities were there - a yoga studio, outdoor BBQ terrace. Even though occupancy isn't until mid-2018, it was really the location and price that sold me. Plus the sales staff was great.

CREB NOW: WHAT KIND OF HOME PLAN DID YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

BASI: I chose a one-bedroom plan with no parking. Initially I wanted a home with parking, but the location is just so close to everything. You can walk everywhere.



HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY FOR A HOME GROWN TOMATO?

Hamlet tomatoes don't come cheap, but store well



DONNA BALZER GUEST COLUMNIST

My daughter was the first to notice I paid \$12.95 for Hamlet tomato seeds.

And as she looked over my shoulder at the price, I was embarrassed. I admitted I ordered them without price checking and I wondered: would these seeds really be worth three times the price of every other seed?

According to the label, Hamlet, is an "organic cluster tomato bred for taste. It produces firm, dark red, fruits. Can be picked vine ripe." I poured the ten seeds from the packet into my hand. Had I been outfoxed by the sexy description?

Like so many gardeners, I start so many kinds of tomatoes: I order seeds from suppliers, buy them locally, and save some from my garden.

I seed everything into fresh Promix soil using a clean plastic tray in mid-March. I place seeded trays over a heat mat and under a plastic dome cover to keep the humidity high until they sprout.

After three weeks, all the tomatoes are up and big enough to separate into little cell packs. By early May, sturdy seedlings go into my greenhouse or into four-inch (9 cm) pots under indoor lights to give away or to plant outside in late May.

Last year, the pricey Hamlets were first to ripen evenly in late July and I started giving them away to friends and neighbours. "Those tomatoes are really hard and tough," said a neighbour. And I agreed. They were both "firm and dark red" as advertised. But firm and hard are not good adjectives for home-grown tomatoes.

I ate the luscious Sweet Hearts, Jaspers and Candyland cherry tomatoes fresh from August into fall. I froze and sauced Juliet and Pony Express paste tomatoes in September. Mid-sized red tomatoes like Big Beef and Seattle's Best offered steady supplies for fresh eating from August onwards.

Black Beauty, I discovered, were not ripe until they went from black to red to rotten, so the tasteless fruits were blended into sauces or frozen when I guessed they were ripe. The Heirloom Brandywine tomatoes, mushy in texture, died an early death from leaf diseases.

But the thick-skinned Hamlets kept on going, and while I reread

the description and wondered again about paying so much for such hard fruits, I kept using them in salads and salsas. Suddenly, it was the third week of December. By then, all the little cherries were a distant memory and all the other tomatoes were frozen or had flopped into a pile of mush in their ripening box.

The last Hamlets, picked green in fall when the weather got cold, kept ripening on a sheet of newspaper in my pantry. When the last one ripened it was served fresh in December, six weeks after bringing it indoors.

So, if Hamlet tomatoes weren't especially tasty, they were the last fruit standing. The last tomato alone was probably worth at least the \$1.30 I paid for each seed. This season, I will proudly order Hamlet again, but will smartly grow only five plants and save the leftover seed for next year.

With hundreds of varieties of tomato seeds for sale, it seems criminal not to start at least one new kind in 2017. So, of course, I ordered the delicious-sounding cluster tomato Alegra, with "exquisite taste and perfect colour." And this time, I read the fine print: ten seeds cost only \$3.95.

Donna Balzer is starting a new program for aspiring new gardeners. Check out www.growfoodcalgary.com for more information.



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EVENT LISTING



25 AVENUE LRT GRADE SEPARATION OPEN HOUSE

5 TO 8 P.M. WHERE: Repsol Centre - 2225 Macleod Trail S.E.

Network Planning is initiating a functional planning study to develop a recommended plan to grade separate 25 Avenue S.E. and the LRT tracks east of Macleod Trail. During Phase I: Education and Issues Scoping, we will ask you about existing issues and concerns, community priorities, future vision for the study area and suggestions for short-term improvements. For more information, visit www.calgary.ca or call 311.