

SHARED AMENITIES

Arms race in fancy in-house amenities in condos

There seems to be a bit of “one-upmanship” happening, these days in Calgary when it comes to condo amenities. Bruce McKenzie, Vice President, Business Development, NORR Architects Engineers Planners tells me they are working on a project that will have luxury guest suites in a prime location looking out onto the Elbow River, a jogging/walking track, a large garden also overlooking the Elbow River and a solar cell phone charging area. It will even have its own dog park.

He also notes their University District’s Rhapsody condo, which will have 288 units exclusively for rent, will have a huge rooftop deck with everything from cabanas and barbecue stations to bocce courts. As far as in-house amenities goes, McKenzie says, “It seems like everyone is trying to outdo the next guy!”

This may well have started in about 2014 when the upscale Concord condo was announced with its all-season garden (i.e. garden in the summer; private skating rink in the winter), two story garages so you can store all of your four and two-wheel toys

and even have your own work bench. There is also a golf simulator, luxury pool area with its own resort-like lounge, as well as a high-end workout/yoga studio.

Not to be outdone Qualex/Landmark did away with the penthouse suites in their Mark on 10th project, replacing them with amazing rooftop amenities for all residents. This includes an outdoor barbecue area with a large hot tub with spectacular mountain views and a huge lounge area with kitchen floor to ceiling window overlooking downtown.

Even the “no parking” N3 condo project in East Village, has a spectacular outdoor roof-top amenity with great views of new Central Library, the National Music Centre, Stampede Park, downtown, Bow and Elbow Rivers and the Rockies. It also has an attractive indoor roof-top exercise room and the best big storage system in the city. The BBQ area has become the communal living room for all the residents. Right outside their front door is the funky Brewer’s Apprentice offering 48 beers on tap that you can take home and just around the corner is Tim Hortons.

Parham Mahboubi, Vice President, Planning & Marketing, Qualex Landmark tells me “When we design building common areas and amenities, we are thoughtful of how these spaces contribute to bringing neighbours together. For example, in Park Point, about 9,000 square-feet of amenity areas offer homeowners a place to converge, whether it is the outdoor Zen Terrace, the infrared sauna, gym, yoga/

pilates spaces or the outdoor lounge and barbecue area. It is near impossible to enter these spaces without interacting with neighbours. Even the Park Point lobby is designed with an inviting lounge seating area that creates yet another space for homeowners to interact and have a social gathering space.”

LAST WORD

My only concern in the trend to build these fancy in-house amenities in new condos is that they may ultimately just take away from the whole idea of inner-city condos increasing the number of people living in the City Center to create more street life. In theory, the new urbanites would mix and mingle in their neighbourhood cafes, lounges, bistros, yoga/fitness studios, parks and pathways — be that Beltline, East Village, Eau Claire, Downtown or Mission. Who is going to do that when you have your own lounges, fitness areas, pools, hot tubs and park-like spaces in your own building?

COULD IT BE THAT NEW CITY CENTRE CONDOS IN CALGARY HAVE TOO MANY AMENITIES?

This just in... After writing this, I happened upon Minto Communities’ Annex project in Kensington designed by Nyhoff Architecture. I learned they will have a multi-use roof-top that will include dog run, a fire pit area, BBQs and what looks like a shuffleboard area. I wonder what is next! **CL**

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CONDOSCAPES

By Richard White

