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InGastown

by NATALIE BRUCKNER-MENCHELLI



“A little grit. A lot of polish.” This may be one of the marketing slogans for PortLiving’s new nine-storey mixed-use development InGastown, but it could also be used to sum up the entire construction process, from the attitude of the team to the final “polished” product.

Situated in Vancouver’s latest up-and-coming neighbourhood, the new building is considered the vanguard for the vibrant Gastown community. Not only because PortLiving has created affordable home ownership in one of North America’s most expensive cities, but its finishes both on the exterior and interior far exceed any typical entry level home.

Designed by award-winning Christopher Bozyk Architects, the building includes seven residential floors housing 61 one-bed and two-bed units (including loft-style apartments) that sit below landscaped roof gardens and above a ground floor commercial space that will benefit the local community.

“The original concept was to design units that are extremely space efficient, so those efficiencies could be passed onto the buyer in terms of cost,” explains Nick Bray, architect at Project Mint Developments, formerly of Christopher Bozyk Architects.

Being located in a HA-2 heritage site of course posed challenges, but with a forward-thinking team, this was seen as an opportunity to demonstrate that with a little ingenuity you can satisfy a number of different bodies and still create affordable homes.

To complement the surrounding buildings, the team opted for a brick and concrete warehouse cube style design that would allow for the most efficient floorplan and minimize wasted space.

“To add life to the design to reflect the vibrant nature of the area, we used a dark brick that gently changes colour depending on how the sunlight hits the building. Then on the soffits we have splashes of orange and yellow that bring the building to life at night,” explains Bray. “The building also features vertical slot windows with orange tinted glass that add life to the elevations. Down on the garage doors [car spaces are dedicated to the penthouses] local art acts as a nod of respect to this area.”

The art was in fact a partnership between PortLiving and Burrard Arts Foundation, and features the work of artist Scott Sueme; it helps to add life and brightness to the neighbourhood.

The site itself, a former vacant lot, posed some unusual challenges and required out-of-the-box thinking: “It’s a very tight site and is surrounded by hydro lines so this stopped us from being able to build the building in a typical way. BC Hydro had moved transformers right up to the property line. It was challenge by the team to figure out how to build around them. We had to build the front half of the building first and then the back half to satisfy BC Hydro requirements,” says Sean Hughes from Kindred Construction Ltd.

This posed a dilemma for the structural engineers BMZ Structural

Engineers, but the team came up with solutions to satisfy load requirements until the transformers could be moved.

Today, looking at the building, you wouldn’t know the hoops that the team skillfully jumped through to create InGastown. Instead, you are faced with a building that features an open retail area on top of which are a variety of well-thought-out suites on a modern floor slab with ceiling heights that maximize space, and rooftop gardens that boast some of the finest views of the city.

The suites feature polished concrete floors, polished quartz countertops, intricate glazing work in the bathrooms and premium cabinet hardware. Evoke International Design worked closely with Christopher Bozyk Architects to ensure the design intent was met and the result is a sophisticated and modern interior design.

Each penthouse has direct access to a private rooftop garden and there is also a communal rooftop space with a large BBQ area and hard and soft landscaping by PMG Landscape Architects.

When it came to the mechanical and electrical systems, Michael Liu from Sterling Cooper NDY says they were fairly standard, which ultimately benefits the end user. “Our biggest challenge was down to the efficiencies of space and finding a location for everything, while ensuring we maintain the esthetics of the building,” says Liu.

His colleague Andrew Jago adds: “We made it a straightforward design with electric baseboard heating and

parkade fans. For the two-level suites we worked closely with Nick to ensure even heat distribution was achieved.”

This high level of co-operation and respect between the team is a common theme, no matter who you speak to, and undoubtedly a reason for its success.

“There were a lot of fresh ideas on this project and an extremely forward-thinking approach by everyone involved. We are very excited about it and feel we have set a standard for the future of Gastown that is respectful and yet will stand the test of time,” says Bray. **A**

LOCATION

150 East Cordova Street, Vancouver, B.C.

DEVELOPER

PortLiving / Buset Development Corporation

PROJECT MANAGER

Next Pacific Development Group Ltd.

ARCHITECT

Christopher Bozyk Architects

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

Kindred Construction Ltd.

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

BMZ Structural Engineers

MECHANICAL CONSULTANT

Sterling Cooper NDY

ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

Opal Engineering

INTERIOR DESIGNER

Evoke International Design Inc.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

PMG Landscape Architects

TOTAL SIZE

54,650 square feet

TOTAL COST

Undisclosed

RENDERINGS COURTESY PORTLIVING