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**DONE DEALS
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THE GLOBE AND MAIL ■ CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ■ GLOBEANDMAIL.COM ■ FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2007

III ARCHITECTURE

Vancouver's year in housing exits in style with a ROAR

A small-scale condo big on environmental awareness my pick for dwelling of the year



**TREVOR BODDY
DWELLING**

The word "dwelling" has two senses: the active manner in which we inhabit; and those houses and apartments where we chose to live. With this in mind, my roundup of the best of 2006 is in two parts. This week, I will build on this latter sense with a brief review of my "Dwelling of the Year" for 2006 — the best of the new physical places we call home. Next week, I will name some "Dwellers of the Year" — those individuals who are leading the way in showing British Columbians how to improve the residential side of urban life.

It will take some time to assimilate the past year's key shifts in how British Columbians build and live in new housing. One fact is crystal clear: by almost any statistical or financial measure, the peak of the housing boom has passed. The countless ways in which this watershed event will shape our lives will be the subject of future columns.

With the passing of ever-greater housing construction numbers and sale prices, there comes one welcome change: the quality of residential design seems to be increasing. This is most apparent for condominium buildings. The demand for fee-simple boxes in space has been so hot since the mid-1990s that the condominium apartment started to resemble a generic commodity — an undifferentiated substance like refined zinc or hog bellies, ripe for speculation.

Because condos sold and re-sold so easily through this period, there was little financial encouragement for developers to invest in better design or include features intended for long life, rather than instant curb appeal. This has changed dramatically in recent years, with developers increasingly shifting from

the generic production of apartments-as-commodities, to niche specializations — Robert Fung for inner city adaptive re-use and infill, Ian Gillespie for top of the topmost luxury towers, and so on.

My choice for "Dwelling of the Year" hits a lot of key buttons: densification of Vancouver's arterial streets outside the downtown peninsula; a bold contemporary design; sustainability balancing livability; the globalization of design and development in our market; flexible floor plan layouts; appropriateness to different stages in the life cycle; and perhaps most of all, an obsession with maximizing natural light deep into apartments.

While it has its flaws, the sheer verve and design innovation of the ROAR condo building on West 10th Avenue next to the former site of the Varsity Theatre gets my nod as "Dwelling of the Year" for 2006. "ROAR" is a contraction of the last names of the two families who built it — Rodriguez and Arias — who split their time between Vancouver and their native Bogota, Colombia.

The project started when they saw an illustration of the work of the small Vancouver design firm of LWPAC in enRoute Magazine on an Air Canada flight back from South America. When they contacted the husband-and-wife principals of the firm — German-born UBC architecture professor Oliver Lang, and Calgary-native UBC grad Cynthia Wilson — they were delighted to learn that both were fluent in Spanish, having designed several buildings in Chile.

Lang and Wilson's investment in the project was soon more than intellectual and professional—they decided they would live at ROAR with their two young daughters, once it opened. A number of features make the resulting 10-unit building — designed by LWPAC under the supervision of architects-of-record Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden — appropriate for families, rare because Vancouver's condo industry tends to direct its all-new product at speculators, young couples and retirees.

Not just kid-friendly but also



PHOTOS BY NIC LEHOUX FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

The sheer verve and design innovation of the ROAR condo building on West 10th Avenue next to the former site of the Varsity Theatre got Trevor Boddy's nod for dwelling of the year in 2006. Corridors, elevators and stairs are all located in the courtyard, and units range from studios of 850 square feet to a 2,000-square-foot penthouse.

building on a sense of community for all of ROAR's residents is its large courtyard — invisible to passers-by because it runs lot line to lot line parallel to West 10th, at dead centre of the site. Rather than bury corridors, elevators and stairs within the building itself, as is typical in Canada (but not South America), these features are all located in the courtyard, with the added benefit that it

acts as a light well and cuts common area heating bills, ensuring natural light and natural cross ventilation for every unit. These range from studios of 850 square feet, right up to the Rodriguez' own penthouse of 2,000 square feet.

From the street, two architectural features are most evident. Long and thin covered decks extend from both West 10th and the rear lane to



'The revised rules are supposed to temper impact on neighbours, but they will make courtyard buildings all-but-impossible.'

mated elevation.

I hope mayor Sam Sullivan and councillors who support his Eco-Density Initiative take a tour of ROAR soon, as there is hardly a better example in this city of a building that combines design innovation with livable Green features. While there, they should talk to co-designer Oliver Lang, who says that ROAR could not be built with the recently-revised C-2 zoning. "We were one of the last projects built under the old rules," says the house-proud Mr. Lang. "The revised rules are supposed to temper impact on neighbours, but they will make courtyard buildings all-but-impossible — we should be increasing building heights along arterials, not reducing them."

Mr. Lang's words and actions are the best EcoDensity-type initiative yet, and a superb bit of city-building.

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III RENOVATIONS

Whatever the project, fixed-price contracts the best way to go



**MIKE HOLMES
MAKE IT RIGHT**

When you are looking for a contractor, one of the toughest decisions you have to make involves how you want the cost of the job to be determined. Three methods most often suggested are: having the contractor manage all aspects of the work, conferring with you about estimated costs and fees; paying for mater-

ials and hours of labour at a certain rate; or agreeing to a fixed price.

A lot of contractors will disagree with me, but I think the only contract you should ever sign is one with a fixed price.

With the "project management" method, the pressure is taken off you. The contractor gets quotes from subtrades and suppliers, presents them to you for a decision (with his help), then does the hiring and oversees the job. You get a costing for all the work required, but it's an estimate, not a guaranteed figure. You might get a guarantee for a range — say 10 per cent above the estimate — but that kind of guarantee is easy to get around when changes are made.

You also are quoted a "manage-

ment price" to be paid to the contractor for running the job. It's calculated on either the expected length of the project or the materials cost. It's usually a fixed price, which makes it look safe, but don't be fooled. Since the contractor has so much control over the costs, he can pretty well get paid what he thinks he can get away with.

Most important with this kind of contract, there's no motivation for the project manager to control costs. If there are over-runs, he loses nothing. In fact, he may gain from it because there is usually a provision for an additional "management charge" if the contract changes in scope or cost — up or down.

Contractors like project manage-

ment agreements because they eliminate financial risk and give them — not you — lots of flexibility when things don't go quite as expected. And they get to pass on any additional costs to you.

For smaller jobs, many contractors like to have a "time and materials" contract, where you agree to pay for materials and hours of labour at a certain rate. The contractor presents you with the invoices for materials and the time cards for workers in a set pay period — say, every two weeks. You write a cheque for it all, plus a surcharge for overhead and profit, which has been outlined in the contract.

Contractors will tell you that this kind of agreement is best when

there are lots of changes to be made during construction. But the question is, why would you commit to a renovation that is so poorly planned that such a contract is necessary? What you're doing is opening up your bank account to your contractor.

The fixed-price contract says: "This is the work to be done, and this is the price you will pay." Period. It clearly lays out the scope of the work in detail. And the price doesn't change unless that scope changes.

With such a contract, you know ahead of time what you are paying for, and will have the power and knowledge to make sure you get what you are paying for. These contracts still allow for flexibility —

you can make changes and negotiate a new fixed price during the job.

It forces you and your contractor to make all the important decisions before construction begins, and demands that you do your homework and learn everything you can before you hand over your hard-earned money. It puts the financial risk squarely where it belongs — in the hands of the contractor. And it "fixes" the contractor's — and your — focus squarely on the job, and its successful completion.

Mike Holmes is the host of *Holmes on Homes* on HGTV. E-mail Mike at mikeholmes@holmesonhomes.com or go to www.holmesonhomes.com

DONE DEALS



||| SOUTHLANDS

8575 Anglers Place
Asking price: \$1,395,000
Selling price: \$1,380,000
Previous price: \$830,000 (1993)
Taxes: \$4,431 (2006)
Days on market: N/A

This four-bedroom home is located on a quiet cul-de-sac in the Southlands community that is, "one of Vancouver's best kept secrets," says agent Sue Johnson.

The 3,166 sq. ft. home is just minutes outside of downtown Vancouver, en route to the international airport with views of the Fraser

River. The location blends the best of two worlds — the quiet and secure privacy of a suburban home, with easy access to city amenities. Ms. Johnson says that's why it was sold in less than two weeks.

"This is a wonderland of homes in a special enclave surrounded by parks, trails and nature," says Ms. Johnson. Residents can also enjoy the Fraser River boardwalk.

The house was built in 1989 and has been recently renovated to include new hardwood flooring and carpets, a designer paint scheme and crown moulding.

"This home offers everything," says Ms. Johnson, including a party-sized patio with private gardens, and a master bedroom with a walk-in closet and five piece en-suite.

The kitchen has a wall of windows to maximize the natural light as well as a brunch counter island and dining area. The floor-to-ceiling windows in the kitchen continue into the family room where there is a gas fireplace. The formal living room also has a gas fireplace.

Listing agents: Sue Johnson and Sarah Thompson, Dexter Realty

||| FALSE CREEK

1425 West 6th Ave., unit 611
Asking price: \$686,000
Selling price: \$686,000
Taxes: \$2,593 (2005)
Days on market: 11

This 1,192 sq. ft. corner suite changed hands at the same price as the previous owners bought it for two years ago. "This unit was sold within three days of its first showing, at full price with nothing more than fresh paint," says agent Rosemary Anderson.

The two-bedroom, two-bathroom home aims to be sophisticated and timeless with quality materials and craftsmanship like granite kitchen counters, radiant heating and an expansive floor plan that

was advertised as "space enough to include your grand piano." The home also has a formal dining room, a fireplace in the living room and en-suite laundry facilities.

"This top-quality Bosa building was exceptionally built and named 'The Modena of Portico,'" says Ms. Anderson. Built in 2000, the building contains numerous amenities like a fitness centre and whirlpool.

Located on the sixth floor with southwest exposure, this suite maximizes natural light with large windows and glass doors. The new owners will enjoy panoramic views from two balconies.

Listing agent: Rosemary Anderson, Re/Max



BY THOMASINA GORDON

Historical property sales information provided by Landcor Data Corp. (www.landcor.com)

||| BURNABY

5221 Oakmount Cres., unit 28
Asking price: \$729,900
Selling price: \$729,900
Previous selling price: \$445,000 (1995)
Taxes: \$3,687 (2006)
Days on market: 18

The Oaklands, once the site of a maximum security prison, is now home to Seasons, Burnaby's "most exclusive, adult orientated strata development," says agent Geoff Jarman.

Mr. Jarman describes the sale of this 2,288 sq. ft. home as, "quick, due to its adult orientation and unique floor plan." The house has two levels with the master bedroom on the ground (main) floor. "It caters for an adult lifestyle including those who can not do stairs," adds Mr. Jarman. The upstairs contains vaulted ceilings, lake views and guest rooms. The whole home takes advantage of the natural light and surrounding beauty with large windows throughout.

The townhouse and entire Seasons development overlooks Deer Lake and neighbours Deer Lake Park, which is one of the biggest



natural parks in the lower mainland. To ensure privacy, Seasons was constructed as the lowest density town home complex in Burnaby, offering the fewest units per acre of (award winning, landscaped) land.

This three-bedroom, three-bathroom home has a double car garage, private patio and two gas-burning fireplaces.

Listing agent: Geoff Jarman, West Coast Realty

||| THE MAIN

239-243 East 21st Ave.
Asking price: \$895,000
Selling price: \$845,000
Previous selling price: \$810,000 (2005), \$575,000 (2002)
Taxes: \$4,181 (2006)
Days on market: 13

"The Main area is a hot market right now," says agent Shelly Smee.

The neighbourhood is well known for its funky shops, restaurants and coffee houses and is close to recreation and the downtown core.

The community also includes an array of heritage and antique houses; this 3,007-sq.-ft. home is a prime example of modernized heritage.

The house was renovated five years ago to update the kitchen (which now has new appliances and a maple-top centre island

with bar-style seating), bathrooms and windows.

Also added was a two-bedroom garden-level rental suite to generate revenue.

Despite the modernizations, "it retains the warmth and charm you expect in a quality built home of this era," says Ms. Smee.

The six-bedroom home was built in 1910 and has one wood-burning fireplace in the formal living room, hardwood flooring throughout and a finished attic loft living space.

The location, on a 4,026 sq. ft. lot with a fenced yard, is close to groceries, schools and bus routes.

"A low maintenance garden and North Shore mountain views from your back yard makes this the one to come home to," says Ms. Smee.

Listing agent: Shelly Smee, Century 21 In Town Realty



BY THOMASINA GORDON

ON SITE

||| ROSSLAND ||| CONDOMINIUMS

Red Mountain rolls out red carpet

Red Mountain Resort in Rossland, B.C. is experiencing a transformation under new ownership lead by president and chief executive of Red Mountain Ventures, Howard Katlov.

The 15-year, \$1-billion resort development will include 1,400 base-area residences as well as various amenities and commercial services, new ski lifts and run expansion. The first ski getaway condominiums, located at Slalom Creek, are on sale now through Sotheby's International Realty Canada and www.liveatred.com.

Red Mountain has long been one of Canada's top ski destinations with 2,900 feet of vertical runs, open glades of fresh powder and scenic tree skiing. "This is skiing like it used to be," says Mr. Katlov, where the stretch of fresh powder and terrain exceeds the lift line-ups.

Red Mountain has also produced some of the country's most talented skiers such as Kerrin Lee-Gartner and Nancy Greene. This year, Red Mountain has been picked by Forbes magazine as one of the top ten ski resorts on the continent.

In order to maintain its natural splendour, Red Mountain Resort is



RED MOUNTAIN RESORT

Developer/ Builder: Red Development, Red Mountain Ventures/Ledcor Construction
Price: Starting at \$400,000
Square footage: 900 to 1,750
Sales centre: 1960 Columbia Ave.
Contact: 1-888-362-7007 or www.liveatred.com

designed as an ecologically-friendly master planned community.

The Slalom Creek development comprises two buildings with a total of 67 two- and three-bedroom units. Each suite has been designed

by Vancouver's M Studio and Rossland's Reimer Designs with hardwood flooring, steam showers and a wine fridge. The architecture was drawn by Fehlman LaBarre in San Diego and Newtown Architectural Services Inc. in Kelowna to include private balconies for each unit large enough for a seven-foot hot-tub.

The project aims to combine world class skiing with a small town community feel. "The Slalom Creek development at Red Mountain Resort has attracted skiers and families from around the world," says Mr. Katlov.

Special to The Globe and Mail

||| BOWEN ISLAND ||| DETACHED

Luxury and nature at Bowen Island site

King Edward Bay is now offering the last waterfront lots with Southwest exposure, overlooking the Strait of Georgia on Bowen Island. "These development lots are as rare as they are valuable," says David Sorenson of Sorenson Fine Homes in Victoria.

Waterfront views on a laid back island just 25 minutes off the coast of Vancouver (via ferry) is one reason people are buying at King Edward Bay.

Another is quality construction by Sorenson Fine Homes, who created the village of Summerside on Salt Spring Island.

Each luxury home at King Edward Bay, which spans 135 acres of micro-climate, second-growth forest and shoreline, will be designed to cause minimal impact on the environment, blend in with the natu-



KING EDWARD BAY

Developer/Builder: King Edward Bay Development Corp. / Sorenson Fine Homes
Price: \$350,000 to \$1,600,000
Square footage: Lots range from 0.5 acres to 1.0 acres
Sales centre: Captains Way, King Edward Bay on Bowen Island.
Contact: 604-947-2891, sales@sorensonfinehomes.com or www.kingedwardbay.com

attract the best trades and suppliers," Mr. Sorenson says.

King Edward Bay offers convenient proximity to downtown Vancouver with the beauty, privacy and scenery of an island escape.

Special to The Globe and Mail

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