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Matching people with the right kind of accommodation



Marketing whiz kids Jason Craik (left) and Cameron McNeill stand in front of Brazo condominium development, which they marketed and is now sold out.

Here's where the action is in East Side condos



URBAN VIEW | If it's a new condo you're looking for, you might want to check out these buildings

DIANA McMEEKIN
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

In my last column, I mentioned that I believe one of the places that will see growth and property appreciation in 2004 is the east side of Vancouver.

Although I named some other areas, East Van really seemed to catch your attention. I have received a number of e-mails asking me where exactly on the east side I see the action happening.

I don't know if these inquiries come from the pot-of-gold seekers looking for a fast return on an investment, or from those who really want to buy into a transitional area early, and live there for some time.

As with most speculation, there are no guarantees and investment appreciation is as much a question of timing as anything else.

There are lots of opportunities coming up, but if it is a new condominium you are looking for then you might want to check into these new or developing buildings:

- Uno at 11th and Kingsway by Intracorp Developments Ltd., just across from Uno at 2630 Prince Edward St. Scheduled to open in March, this is an exciting new concrete construction building featuring about 110 condominium apartments and townhomes designed by the celebrated architect Peter Busby and interiors by the brilliant Cecconi Simone team. www.unoliving.com

- Soma by Bogner Developments Ltd., just across from Uno at 2630 Prince Edward St. Designed by Rositch Hemphill & Associates and due to open for sale in spring www.somalofts.ca

- The Hub at Main and 10th developed by Robert Wilson. Currently open on-site in a pre-sale office and selling well. www.hubonmain.com

- The Left Bank at 919 Station St. (near Prior). Fifty-nine homes in concrete construction with a heritage component at the base.

See **BE PREPARED** H6

Finding lifestyle solutions

MARKETING | Cameron McNeill and Jason Craik's company assists developers in everything from design and pricing to ensuring a project has some 'soul'

BY BRIAN MORTON
VANCOUVER SUN



How do you convince a couple who've lived in a house at the foot of Cypress Mountain for 30 years that they should move to a second-floor condominium in Richmond?

Well, it's not always easy, admit partners Jason Craik and Cameron McNeill, who are gaining a reputation as two of the city's top condo marketers.

But it's more than doable, although the secret is to forget about trying to "convince" those clients.

In fact, says Craik, Richmond's Imperial Landing development — which they both marketed — was specifically targeted at people who had lived in areas like the West Side and

West Vancouver and wanted to retain many of the amenities they were used to.

"You can't really convince them [to buy]," says the 32-year-old Craik, who, with McNeill, has sold more than 1,200 homes in the Lower Mainland in the past two years. "What you have to do is offer something that suits the lifestyle they want now. [Imperial Landing] was a great example. We took time to

educate the general market in the Lower Mainland about what a beautiful community that was and that the condo was only part of the package. We targeted the west side of Vancouver as a comparable community. [Steveston] has all the uniqueness that Kitsilano has, from the boutique shops and restaurants and seawall and water and pedestrian living that Kitsilano has. So, before we even got into the product, we really sold the lifestyle."

McNeill says it's important that buyers have a genuine interest in changing their lifestyle. "I have to be cautious about using the word 'convince.' They have to be ready, willing and able to move to Coal Harbour from a single family home. So it's not convincing. It's a matter of exposing [the product] in the right fashion."

Two years ago, McNeill, 33, and Craik combined their marketing and sales experience to create McNeill and Craik Real Estate Solutions, commonly known as MAC.

After earning their spurs with some of the largest developers in the area — primarily the Onni Group of Compa-

nies — the two decided to form their own firm specializing in new large-scale residential projects.

Since then, the company has become one of B.C.'s largest residential marketing companies with about 25 employees working out of a downtown office.

The company assists developers in everything from design and pricing to orchestrating promotions and overseeing sales to giving the project character and 'soul.'

They're paid a commission based on sales, but will not say what percentage of the selling price goes to MAC.

McNeill and Craik say they love what they're doing, adding that they and their staff are having a lot of fun these days.

The company's 16th floor Georgia Street office commands a lovely view of False Creek, but it's anything but stuffy.

A couple of vintage-style couches dominate the fairly sparse entrance foyer, with photographs of Charlie Chaplin, Malcolm X, Pablo Picasso and

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PETER BATTISTONI/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

Jason Craik (left) and Cameron McNeill say they draw up 'the whole picture' of a potential buyer for a specific development.

Sales reps get to know their customers

From HI

Amelia Earhart peering down from an adjacent wall.

Dress is casual, offices are 'open' and jeans optional, at least for the boss.

The company, they say, has been hugely successful in condo sales — second only in the Lower Mainland to super salesman Bob Rennie.

McNeill and Craik's ventures have included the Brava condo project in Yaletown, Imperial Landing in Richmond, the Palladio highrise in Coal Harbour and The Royalton highrise in New Westminister.

They're currently selling 270 units at Hamptons Park in Richmond, 95 homes at Spring Brook in Richmond, as well as working on pre-sales marketing of 180 condos in Coal Harbour, 450 units in Brentwood in Burnaby and a 300-unit highrise in Yaletown.

Cressey Development vice-president of development Hani Lammam, who is working with McNeill and Craik in the company's Hamptons Park project, likes their style.

"I was well aware of their success on Brava and I'm pleased to work with them. I like their style. They're less self promoting than some other guys who do similar work. They're more interested in the interests of the developer."

Both McNeill, who lives in downtown Vancouver, and Craik, who lives in White Rock, say it's vital for marketing agents to be involved in a project from its earliest beginnings.

"We get involved in a project very early on, primarily at the acquisition of the land stage," notes McNeill. "We help determine the size of the units, help select the interior designers. We hypothesize in advance about who our consumers are going to be. We paint a picture of Susie Q or Joe Blow or Mr. Investor or whoever. It's a lot different than what ABC Realty Company, where you're told to go and sell it."

McNeill says it's a mistake to underestimate buyers. "Consumers are very sophisticated. If we can show someone how their lifestyle will improve by making a move then I think we've done a pretty good job. We don't put up a smokescreen, because they wouldn't buy it. They will evaluate things very objectively."

McNeill says Vancouver has

evolved into one of the most densely populated metropolises in North America. "It's very acceptable in Vancouver, for example, for a couple from North or West Vancouver to sell a single family home and move to Coal Harbour. That would not be the case of Seattle, where their condo market is a tenth the size of Vancouver."

He says it's vital to know your customer.

"We don't just look at a young couple. We go the whole picture, what their jobs are, where they currently live, the car they drive, we completely create the picture of a hypothetical buyer."

He cites a Brentwood condo project they worked on that was very successful. "I think we sold 90 units in a month or so. We identified the Korean market as being a very important market there."

He says the top error by what he calls "unsophisticated" developers is bringing the wrong mix of units to market, and making condos too expensive.

"A lot of established architects are often set in their ways. They might design a one bedroom home in downtown Vancouver for 650 square feet. That unit today in Yaletown will sell for over \$250,000. Right away that eliminates the investor buyer and the first-time buyers because of affordability.

"We bring product to the market that fits in the range of those buyers. For example, the developer says a 520-square-foot condo is impossible. Well, we say yes you can and here's 10 examples. So, we help the developer by influencing the product to bring that 520 square foot unit on the market. It would be around \$200,000 and would rent for approximately the same amount as the 650-square-foot condo. So you're appealing to the investor. And you're also appealing to the guy who can only afford 200,000 and wants to get out of renting and into owning."

Too little light and storage are other factors that are often overlooked," adds Craik, who notes that they've also worked on a few duds over the years. "Some developers say that in a hot market we can do less and save money and we'll still sell the product. Well, they're probably right, but what if the market turns and we're left with a mediocre sales centre or a product that's inferior?"



The popularity of developments such as the Collingwood means would-be buyers cannot always procrastinate before making an offer.



WARD PERRIN/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

The living room in the display suite at Elements, at Broadway and Ontario, shows the high style in this classy project.



RALPH BOWER/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

The MacGregor condo building is part of Collingwood Village, a very successful community near the Joyce SkyTrain station.

Be prepared to make a quick decision

From HI

Currently offered by appointment and also rumoured to be selling well. www.loftsvancouver.ca

- Elements at Broadway and Ontario by Aragon Properties Ltd. Currently, 20 of these well-finished homes are still available with occupancy in spring. www.elementsonbroadway.com

- Park Renfrew. Fifty-six condominium homes at Renfrew and East Hastings that will soon be marketed by Rennie Marketing Systems. For details, call 604-682-2088.

If townhomes are more your style, check out Mosaic Homes or Pacific Rim Property Developments as they are both considering something in the Cedar

Cottage area of East Vancouver.

Concert Properties will also be continuing with their very successful Collingwood Village community near the Joyce SkyTrain Station with a new tower called Urba to be launched soon. www.urbavancouver.com

I have also been asked about single-family housing on the east side, and I am not really active in this field. However, over the past few months I keep hearing about the charms and relative value to be found in Cedar Cottage and Trout Lake.

There are many who are also extremely passionate about the community of Strathcona, parts of which have tremendous history and character, and don't forget, your downtown office is just a walk away.

This neighbourhood will also

appreciate well with the upcoming Olympic Village development. For the real picture, it is important to do some homework by reading community papers and real estate publications. Also, take the time to talk to a professional realtor who specializes in your chosen area.

If you are serious about looking for a new home in 2004, be aware that properties of all kinds are selling quite swiftly. This means that if you find something you like, you will have to make up your mind right away.

In order to do this, many of us

need mortgage financing. It is therefore important to take the time to qualify yourself for a mortgage before looking.

It doesn't cost anything and it is a good reality check as to what you can actually afford. Your local bank is a good place to start, but if you prefer a more personal service, there are numerous mortgage brokers who can come and talk to you in the privacy of your own home.

There are many to choose from, but I have enjoyed dealing with Shelley Purba of HLC. You can reach her at 604-657-2222.

Diana McMeekin is president of Artemis Marketing Group Inc., a Vancouver based consulting company to both Canadian and international development companies. Diana is also a member of the Urban Development Institute and a regularly featured speaker at housing industry events. You can reach Diana via e-mail: diana@artemismarketing.net

NEW HOME DEVELOPMENTS • DIRECTORY

North Vancouver

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1st St

Downtown

R & R
Coming soon
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1021 West Hastings St.

Vancouver

Brownstone
13th & Laurel St.
Chancellor
1715 Theology Mall
Elements
2515 Ontario St/West Broadway
Journey
2583 Blythe Eagles Rd.
King Edward Village
Coming Soon - 604-694-1610

Vancouver

Mathew's House
2083 West 33rd Ave.

Terraces on 7th
1570 W. 7th Ave.

The Bentley
1010 Homer St.

Yaletown Park
Coming soon

Highbury House
3637 West 17th Ave.

Firenze
Abbott & Keefer

Westchester
2600 West Mall

Westside

Kingswood
1596 W. 14th Ave. (@ Fir St.)

Burnaby

Arcadia West
7180 Kingsway

Fresco
4412 Buchanan St. at Rosser

Harmony
9393 University Cres.

One University Cres.
9300 University Cres.

Urba
Collingwood Village west of
Boudry by Joyce Sky Train Stn.

Botanica
7350 Salisburry

Southborough
7503 18 St.

Strathmore Lane
9789 Cameron St.

New Westminister

Uptown
Presentation Ctr.
Royal City Mall - 610 6th St.

Port Moody

Stoneridge
51 Ashwood Drive

The Estates
31 Fernway Drive

Richmond

Bayberry Park
General Currie & Heather

Renaissance
9250 Ferndale Rd.

Sequoia at Hampton Park
9250 Ferndale Rd.

Surrey

Cambria
4-152888 36th Ave.

Sandpiper Crescent
3364 145A St.

Fraser Pointe
15479 112A Ave.

Surrey

Millers Lane
14872 59th Ave.

Tamaron
12083 92A Ave.

White Rock

Sussex House
1540 Foster St.

Langley

Jeffries Brook
7025 201B St.

All developments listed are in this West Coast Homes section

*Source: NADbank 2002

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