

In Italian, *belvedere* refers to a simple structure such as a gazebo or summerhouse sited to command a fine view. Italians — and others — would agree that the just completed Belvedere residential tower in the heart of Victoria, B.C., offers one of the finest views anywhere, providing residents with ever changing vistas of the Inner Harbour, Beacon Hill Park and the Strait of Juan de Fuca beyond.

But a simple structure it is not. In fact, Belvedere is the final phase of a multi-year, three-phase construction project that has transformed a two-acre, pot-holed parking lot into a mixed-use urban oasis.

Rob Strayer, the contract adminis-



Strayer says this has been achieved largely by the public plaza and artwork, which form a natural walkway, inviting one to stroll through or sit down and take in the surroundings.

"The actual surface of the plaza itself, which has a design in it, is integrated with a water feature, a reflecting pool on the Astoria side and some land-



PHOTOS COURTESY CONCERT PROPERTIES

# Belvedere

(Phase 3 of the Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour Hotel and Highrise Residences)

by Suzanne Morphet

trator for Lawrence Doyle Architect Inc., says the firm wanted the 16-storey Belvedere to be distinct from the other phases, but complementary. Belvedere is two-tone concrete, in contrasting earthy shades of beige, similar to Astoria, the first residential tower that Concert Properties Ltd. built on the site.

"I wouldn't say it's particularly unusual," says Strayer, "but I think there's quite a bit of detailing and refinement in the design and the detailing, particularly in terms of the masonry, which is carried over from the Astoria project, so there's a tie-in, particularly the treatment on Humboldt Street."

The condo tower has 77 suites and ground-level retail. One of the challenges facing Concert was the site, which is on a fairly steep hill.

"The slope of the site was difficult to work with," says Rod Wilburn, senior vice president, sales and marketing. "The grade drops significantly from Fairfield Road down to Blanshard Street. We wanted to ensure that the plaza was at one level. We accomplished this by establishing the principal entrance off Fairfield Road and the plaza commercial entrances off Humboldt Street."

Wanting to be good neighbours, the company developed a narrow, deep floor-plate to preserve other people's views to the south, while working to optimize views for residents of Belvedere, says Wilburn.

Now that Belvedere is complete, it is easy to see how seamlessly it blends with Astoria next door and, further down the street, the Marriot Inner Harbour Hotel — the first phase of the project.

scaping coming down from Belvedere," says Strayer, adding that they were part of the negotiations with the City of Victoria.

City planners wanted this spectacular piece of property to be aesthetically appealing to everyone, not just residents. In part, that meant the landscaping company had to figure how to balance the private aspects of the project with the public desire for accessibility.

Peter Kreuk of Durante Kreuk Ltd. says the challenge was "to create some privacy for the residents, so they feel they're in their own garden and not part of that urban fabric." The company did that partly by using fences and gates, "but they're fairly transparent, there's no wall. Over time, the hedges will get bigger and start to create more privacy."

"There's a lot of perennials in both projects and ground covers that need a bit of time to mature and fill in," says Kreuk. There are also trees including magnolias and the Pacific dogwood. Kreuk is confident they will thrive once their roots get established, and within a couple years the grounds will be as lush as those outside the Marriott Hotel.

The Belvedere was completed on time and on budget. The last component finished was the interior design, a job awarded to Portico Design Group. Company principal Tara Wells says the concept going into the project was for a contemporary look.

"Initially, we were toward things like cabinets with legs and movable islands in the kitchen, but I think after a little more market research, Concert realized that might be a bit too modern for

the target audience — potential purchasers between their mid-40s and mid-60s."

What they turned to instead, says Wells, is a final design that is warm, contemporary and bends a bit to the traditional.

Kitchens and ensuite bathrooms are equipped with maple shaker cabinetry and polished granite slab countertops. Residents have a choice of maple or teak flooring in the entry and principal living rooms, while the ensuite bathrooms boast hand-set, solid-cast, porcelain tile flooring. The bedrooms are cozy with sisal-style carpeting.

"Basically, it's just classic lines. It transcends time and it never becomes dated," says Wells. "When you think of traditional design, you envision crown mouldings, heavier door casings and a built-up fireplace mantel. Belvedere emulates a classic contemporary style with straight lines, it's quite timeless."

The Belvedere's amenity spaces are "outstanding," according to Wells. "The amenity lounge is glazed on two sides, lending lots of light to this public space. The other walls are covered in faux leather. The lounge contains a pool table, fireplace, casual seating and an eating bar area. I think it's going to be quite the facility for the residents."

For active residents, there is also a bicycle club. "We made it quite bullet-proof," says Wells, "because we imagine people will be coming in here after a workout, in their sweats, cleats or runners."

Above all, though, Wells believes the most important feature of Belvedere is the one every realtor

knows well: location. "The location was so key, the units have a lot of view, a lot of view and they're within walking distance to absolutely everything in downtown Victoria. This is what makes Belvedere such a jewel box — to be right downtown and available to everything, yet set back enough that you are not experiencing all of the daily hustle and bustle of the harbour." ■

**LOCATION**  
788 Humboldt Street  
Victoria, B.C.

**OWNER/DEVELOPER**  
Concert Properties Ltd.

**ARCHITECT**  
Lawrence Doyle Architect Inc.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**  
Campbell Construction Ltd.

**STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT**  
Glottman Simpson Consulting Engineers

**MECHANICAL CONSULTANT**  
Sterling Cooper & Associates

**ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT**  
Nemetz (SA) & Associates Ltd.

**INTERIOR DESIGN**  
Portico Design Group

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT**  
Duranter Kreuk Ltd.

**GEOTECHNICAL CONSULTANT**  
Geopacific Consultants Ltd.

**CIVIL CONSULTANT**  
1st Team Engineering

**TOTAL AREA**  
104,796 square feet

**TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST**  
\$23 million