

SUNDAY HOMES

WESTCOASTLIVING

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SECTION E

Where it's all just a walk away

MIRRA: Newton lowrise at the heart of a friendly Surrey neighbourhood

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Walkability isn't something one normally associates with suburbs, with their strip malls and pedestrian-unfriendly streetscapes, but a new, soon-to-be unveiled Surrey development aims to change that.

For the families who will be living at Mirra, a 156-unit Westcoast-inspired low-rise in Newton, home is going to be within walking distance to restaurants, stores, groceries and transportation hubs.

"Newton is a real walkable community," said Nick Askew, president of Pacesetter Marketing, which is handling sales for Mirra. "There's a lot of infrastructure that makes it neighbourhood friendly."

The location — tranquil despite its proximity to bustling King George Highway — is about six blocks away from the Newton bus exchange and a 10-minute drive from the King George SkyTrain station.

Newton is also one of the five Surrey town centres mayor Dianne Watts wants to see spruced up as part of the growing city's Townshift makeover contest. The competition is designed to create more livable, walkable and sustainable hubs in each of the areas. Newton's theme is New Town: Connecting Density to Transit.

The Mirra's first phase is a four-storey wood-frame building made up of 71 units with 12 different floor plans.

The majority of units are one-bedroom suites, but options range from a 468 sq. ft. studio to an 893 sq. ft. two-bedroom and den.

The exterior is an homage to Westcoast sensibilities, with its use of stone, wood and post-and-beam construction.

A second phase with 86 suites will be released early next year.

Like most real-estate projects, sale and construction of Mirra was temporarily put on hold last year as



This is a one-bedroom with den that seems quite spacious despite its small size since the floor plan is open-concept with no living-room and dining-room divide. JON MURRAY PHOTOS — THE PROVINCE



The facts

What: Mirra, 71 units in the first phase.

Where: 138th Street and 75A Avenue.

Builder/Developer: Wanson Development.

Sizes: Studio at 468 sq. ft.; one bedrooms from 554 to 685 sq. ft.; one bedroom and den starting at 659 sq. ft.; two bedroom at 835 sq. ft. and two bedroom and den at 893 sq. ft.

Prices: Starting at \$154,900.

Open: Presentation centre at 13778 76th Ave. opens on Nov. 7. Hours are noon to 5 p.m.

More info: www.mirraliving.com



A rendering of what the Mirra development in Newton will look like when it's completed in spring 2011.

uncertainty and turmoil rumbled through world economies.

The year-long delay, however, has turned out to be a boon to aspiring homeowners, who are now beginning to dip their toes anew into the real-estate market.

Half of the units at Mirra are priced under \$200,000 — "very affordable in Vancouver dollars," said Askew.

Half of the homes are also eligible for a mortgage promotion, which allows buyers to pay less than \$300 a month for a year after putting down a 10-per-cent deposit.

Taking out his calculator, Askew explained that a \$170,000 one bed-

room, which might have a \$650 monthly mortgage, comes out to only \$150 a month for the first year after the developer's subsidy.

The average monthly rent for the area is about \$750 per month.

"It makes it more affordable for first-time homebuyers to buy and for the savvy investor, it makes a lot of sense," said Askew, noting that interest rates are still near historical lows and some experts predicting average home prices to increase by eight per cent next year.

On display at the presentation centre is a 659 sq. ft. one-bedroom and den unit that feels spacious despite its compact size.

The floor plan is typical open concept, but stands out because it isn't meant to be divided as a living room and dining room.

Instead, buyers can put their dining table in the middle of the L-shaped kitchen, or go with the optional add-on of an island, which does double duty as a work space and dining table.

The floors are engineered hardwood, in a dark walnut. All suites have patios or balconies, while most boasts full height pantries for extra storage in the kitchen.

For the units with dens, a big plus is the location of the den along the outside wall, so instead of the typi-

cal dark, windowless cubbies that pass for dens in other projects, the dens at Mirra are airy and light-filled which make them a good spot for a home office or a kids' playroom.

To keep the units affordable, amenities are kept to a minimum.

There's no pool, for example — Askew said research found only 20 per cent of tenants would use it regularly — which keeps monthly strata fees down to 22 cents per square foot.

Mirra is scheduled to be completed in spring 2011.

The grand opening is scheduled for Nov. 14.

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