

# Small B.C. town woos the luxury buyer



**KERRY GOLD >**

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A rendering of the townhouses in Nelson, B.C. that are part of a 16.2-acre redevelopment of the 105-year-old Granite Pointe golf course by Vancouver-based Hallō Properties.

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A Vancouver developer is set to begin the first phase of a major housing project that will remake the 105-year-old Granite Pointe golf course, hoping to lure a wave of wealthy, golf-loving buyers to sleepy Nelson, B.C.

Charming B.C. towns such as Nelson had started to attract the attention of developers even before the pandemic. Vancouver developers Graham Kwan and Farhad Ebrahimi, of Hallō Properties, have been working with the community golf course



society going back a decade, says Mr. Kwan, after Mr. Ebrahimi discovered Nelson's potential while scouting for a new property.

Their concept for the 16.2-acre parcel begins with 24 townhouses with a starting price of \$1.95-million, fully furnished and stocked with dishes and towels and every high-end convenience. The price includes two lifetime memberships to the revamped golf course, The Dodger – named after the city's high number of American draft dodgers who famously settled there. The target market includes downsizers, young families who've cashed out of an urban market, investors and people who want a bolthole. Future development will include condos, including senior living units, employee housing, retail and hotels.

"We wanted to create a property that was fully curated to be able to provide homeowners what they couldn't access by themselves," says Mr. Kwan, on a video call from Vancouver. "Our specs for the homes are quite unique. The mattress is exactly the same spec as the Park Hyatt. The linens and towels are exactly the same spec as Fairmont Gold. ... The glassware is Austrian crystal. The dinnerware is the porcelain from Villeroy & Boch. The Vitamix [blender] that comes with your unit is not the one you buy over the counter. It's the commercial grade one."





The 24 townhouses have a starting price of \$1.95-million and come fully furnished and stocked with dishes and towels and every high-end convenience.

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Vancouver-based Hallō Properties develops recreational destination properties, with upcoming projects in Revelstoke and the Sunshine Coast. Mr. Ebrahimi is also the CEO and founder of Crestone Properties, a development, property management and real estate asset management company. Their target market for Nelson will include the many Albertans and residents who want to escape the Lower Mainland, but also wealthy American golfers seeking a mountain backdrop on the fairway. The master-planned project will be anchored by an 18-hole golf course after a two-year renovation that begins next year. Designed by golf course architect Doug Carrick, it will be managed by American golf course management company Troon. Mr. Kwan said that private jets will be able to land in the West Kootenay Regional Airport, a half-hour drive away. Access is key, because Nelson is an eight-hour drive from Vancouver. To provide housing for workers, there will be 100 units of employee rental housing once the project is built out, which will take 10 to 15 years.

“A lot of folks in the industry haven’t really looked under the hood of what Nelson offers or what the region offers,” says Mr. Kwan, who has 35 years of experience in resort development. “We have guys in Toronto that are very, very fond of what we’re





doing. And their words are basically, ‘I’m in the Maple Leaf Lounge for breakfast. I jump on the Air Canada flight to Vancouver. I then fly into Castlegar and I’m up at your property by 11:45.’”

Marketer for the project, Maria Peters, adds that it’s an obvious draw for people in the Lower Mainland seeking the quiet life.

“Here’s a distinct opportunity to change your life,” says Ms. Peters. “If you’re in Vancouver and if you’re sick of what’s happening and you know you can have a career up there and you just want to go and completely change things up, it’s an opportunity for you.”



The price includes two lifetime memberships to the revamped golf course, The Dodger.

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The townhouses are just the start of a \$500-million build out, and Ms. Peters says they’ve sold a few so far. The prices are on par with those of a house on Vancouver’s west side, which a recent Century 21 survey put at \$1,161 per square foot on average.



The townhouses are 1,760 square feet and include a 260-square-foot guest suite, as well as substantial outdoor space.

The idea for the guest suite is that it could also be used for short or long-term rental, said Mr. Kwan.

The community golf course needed to clear an old debt that had grown to \$1.4-million after it had expanded from a nine-hole course to 18 holes. They applied to rezone from park and recreation land to mixed use residential in 2019, covering about 12.5 per cent of the 130-acre golf course. An official community plan had been amended that same year to allow residential, and in June of 2023, Granite Pointe sold the residential parcel to Hallō. The developer has a long-term lease on the remaining golf course acreage. They must apply for further rezonings for each new development phase, but because the province eliminated public hearings for developments within an existing official community plan, they won't have to go through the entire process again.

For every unit built, the developer will contribute \$1,000 toward the city's affordable housing fund, says Mayor Janice Morrison.

Like most highly livable cities, Nelson, with a population of around 11,000 people, also has a housing shortage, with a vacancy rate near zero. But the average house price is around \$679,000, said Ms. Morrison, which is far higher than the new projects under way.

"I think people are always concerned about what growth does to the community," said Ms. Morrison. "I think there is a fear of the unknown. What does this project look like in our small town? So yes, there are concerns. There were concerns in 2019 around traffic ... I know the concern about gentrification, I've heard it. I can't answer those.

"To me, it's an interesting project. And I'm kind of going to wait and see how the first stage goes."







A view of Nelson, B.C. The developers emphasize that they want to maintain Nelson's small-town charms and authenticity.

HALLÖ PROPERTIES

It's not the first high-end housing to arrive in Nelson. She cites a new waterfront development on land that had been vacant for two decades. Some of those units are selling for more than \$1-million and the majority are sold, with another phase to come, she says.

Before new provincial legislation, Nelson had already restricted short-term rental, and there is a cap on the number of such rentals allowed in the city, she adds. That means a limitation on short-term rentals at the golf course property.

The developers emphasize that they want to maintain Nelson's small-town charms and authenticity, and they've gone out of their way to connect with the local retailers. And that's smart, because Nelson residents are protective of their unique town, with its stock of colourful historic buildings and 55 downtown restaurants and a thriving arts scene, never mind the majestic setting on Kootenay Lake with the Selkirk Mountains as a backdrop.





“I can tell you the citizens of Nelson will be watching it,” she says.

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