



■ The kitchen, at left, features top-of-the-line finishing like granite counters and KitchenAid stainless appliances. It is open to the dining and family-room areas, which are finished with quality wood floors. The family room, bottom right, has a cozy fireplace and is just off the kitchen. Bottom centre photo shows master bedroom while photo at far left is of the kitchen as viewed from the dining area. WAYNE LEIDENFROST — THE PROVINCE

Quick facts

Glenbrook

What: Glenbrook is 59 townhomes in the master-planned community of Victoria Hill, New Westminster

Where: Victoria Hill is the redevelopment of the central Woodlands site adjacent to Queens Park in New Westminster

Developer: Onni Group

Sizes: Three-bedroom townhomes, 1,470 sq. ft. to 1,800 sq. ft.

Prices: \$479,900 to \$500,000 and up

Open: Open noon to 6 p.m. daily except Fridays, off McBride Boulevard at Royal Avenue in New Westminster, 604 423-0733, www.onni.com.



Luxury homes in a central location

NEW WESTMINSTER: Glenbrook part of huge Victoria Hill development planned for old Woodlands site

BY JEANI READ
STAFF REPORTER

Onni is becoming known for its master-planned communities as well as its individual developments. And Victoria Hill is one of their pet projects; big — 65 acres and 1,270 units — and beautiful.

Partly, says Victoria Hill head development manager Beau Jarvis, they want to be instrumental in “making a negative into a positive.” The site was the grounds of Woodlands Hospital, whose decades-old abuse allegations are still in the courts.

But the new community has all the earmarks of successfully being able to transcend the unfortunate past. Its public-access greenspace, parks, walkways and even a pedestrian overpass into Queens Park are

designed with grace and accessibility in mind. “Having public access was key,” says Jarvis.

And the heritage renovations are planned to erase all the institutional aspects of the buildings, restoring them to their original elegance.

“This is a really exciting project,” says Jarvis. “The majority of the site has been dedicated back to parkland. It’s a beautiful site, with spectacular views across the Fraser to the mountains beyond.”

The mature landscaping, with hundreds of trees “from all over the world,” says Jarvis, adds to the unique feel of the site.

Jarvis is a big fan of New Westminster as a central and overlooked Lower Mainland spot. “New West got kind of left behind in terms of Lower Mainland development,” he says. “But now it’s a really up-and-

coming place.”

Plans for Victoria Hill include highrises, lowrises and some market housing, and the community will be enhanced by some light commercial enterprises — coffee shops, corner groceries, hair salons.

Also on the site will be assisted-living units created in co-operation with the Fraser Health Authority, public daycare and a walk-in clinic, creating a complete sense of neighbourhood.

Glenbrook is the luxury townhome grouping in this neighbourhood. “They’re three-bedroom, three-storey townhomes with really high-end specs,” says Jarvis. Huge garages with tons of storage space, roomy 1,500- to 1,800-sq.-ft. floor plans, and great finishings like granite counters in the kitchens, marble in the bathrooms, hardwood on

the main floors and stainless KitchenAid appliance packages are all standard. These are among the finishings Jarvis cites that are attracting a surprising mix of buyers of all ages, including young families and professionals as well as the expected empty-nesters.

Bucking the open-plan trend, the homes feature a formal living room separate from a kitchen that is open to the dining room and family room, a feature purchasers seem to be liking really well, Jarvis says.

“People are really happy with the units,” he says. “They walk in and say, ‘Wow!’”

Valerie Pritchard did exactly that. “It was a real wow,” says Pritchard, an insurance claims manager whose husband, Vince, is also in the biz as an independent adjuster. Yes, they met at an insurance confer-

ence, and now that their four kids have grown and flown, are downsizing from their large four-bedroom home in Coquitlam.

“We were pretty picky,” says Valerie. “We were in no rush. We looked for at least a year.”

They needed a townhouse with a yard for their black Lab Cassie, and wanted less wasted space and less exterior work — and in Glenbrook they found it all plus finishings that Pritchard recognized as being high-end and lovely.

Friends alerted them to Glenbrook, so they were right on the spot, able to pick exactly the unit they wanted.

“We walked in and said, ‘That one,’” says Pritchard. “It happened so smoothly, it seemed that it was meant to be.”

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