

NEW-HOME PROJECT PROFILE

Onni's Richmond intentions are Olympian

Ora in the Oval Village is big — not five-ring big, but three-tower big



Ora

Project location: 6951 Elmbridge Way, Richmond

Project size: Three towers ranging from 12 to 15 stories with 324 units

Residence sizes: 540 to 920 sq. ft.

Prices: From \$278,900

Developer: Onni Group

Architect: LDA/IBI Architects

Interior designer: Onni in-house design

Sales centre: 6951 Elmbridge Way

Hours: Noon to 6 p.m., Saturday to Thursday

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Web: www.onni.com

Tentative occupancy: Spring 2013

BY MICHELLE HOPKINS

Plenty of excitement surrounded the Richmond Olympic Oval when it was built. But after the Winter Olympics ended, that optimism turned to cautious hopefulness as locals waited to see what the City of Richmond planned on doing in the area surrounding the venue.

A few months back, the city unveiled its plan for the Oval Village: a master-planned community residential, commercial and recreational areas.

It will be a high-density development, eventually home to 15,000 residents, that will emphasize walkability and connectivity, incorporating environment-friendly elements and providing diverse housing options and architecture.

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The Ora developer has specified a KitchenAid appliance package and countertops of white-gloss lacquer quartz composite stone in the kitchens. More quartz will top vanities. Phase 1 buyer Benny Ching says he bought because he thinks the Onni Group prices are 'reasonable and affordable' and because he expects all that glazing on the exteriors will flood his future home with natural light.

Considered as a declaration of the location of a future 'village,' Richmond's 'Oval Village,' the three Ora towers, are a pronounced shout and worthy of a big and long-established developer such as Onni. Ora residents will have a wellness centre to use: indoor pool, squash and racquetball courts, fitness room, yoga space and a media room with a theatre. They will also have a rooftop courtyard. Onni expects to complete construction in 2013.



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Ora will include plenty of park-like green space, fitness area and media room

"The focus of the village's open space will be an expanded park on the city's dike, made possible by the relocation of River Road south from the current location adjacent to the dike, as well as the upgrading of the Hollybridge Canal, which will be done as part of the Ora development," says Richmond director of development Brian Jackson.

One of the first developers to break ground in the village is the Onni Group, with a condominium development called Ora. When complete, it will consist of three towers with 324 homes, as well as a mix of retail space, says Beau Jarvis, Onni's vice-president of development.

"Of those [homes], Onni contributed 18 one- and two-bedroom affordable rental housing units," Jarvis adds.

The towers will share a 42,000-square-foot wellness centre, which will include a fitness and yoga area, an indoor pool, squash and racquetball courts and a media room with a theatre. Richmond resident Benny Ching has been anxiously awaiting the redevelopment surrounding the oval and just bought a two-bedroom suite in Phase 1 of Ora.

"The selling price of Ora initially attracted me to the project because it is reasonable and

affordable," says Ching. "I also like the layout of the interior; it is well designed."

Ching liked the fact that the ample glazing will allow for plenty of natural light:

"I like that the Oval Village is beside the river, with great views of the mountains and the dike," he says.

A local businessman who has lived and worked in Richmond for many years, Ching sees the potential for a good return, should he ever want to sell.

"After a few years, I believe that there will [be] many new apartments around the Oval Village, which will only increase the value of the condo," he says.

The proximity to the Vancouver International Airport, the Canada Line and the city centre, with its restaurants, shopping and schools, were also important considerations.

The 165 homes in Phases 1 and 2 of the project have been sold, and the focus is now on the Phase 3 Ora homes. (The first phase consisted of 68 units, while the second consisted of a 97-unit tower with a mix of one- and two-bedroom units starting at \$278,900.)

"The majority of the homes in all three phases will have city, water and mountain



Onni Group's Ora development will feature a landscaped rooftop courtyard and garden plots.

views," says Jarvis. "The architects worked with Sherman Tai, a feng shui master, to design a harmonious combination of residential and retail spaces."

Among the Ora homes are 70 that have been municipally zoned as live-work spaces. Marketer Cam Good says those homes, which are about 1,000 square feet and in the lower levels of the towers, would be ideally

suitable for small-business owners such as hairdressers, consultants or graphic designers.

Each Ora home will have a combination of oak hardwood flooring and contemporary ceramic tiles, Berber-style carpet in the bedrooms, white-gloss lacquer quartz composite stone countertops in the kitchen and bathroom, and a five-piece stainless steel KitchenAid appliance package. Buyers

can choose one of two colour schemes.

There will also be a rooftop courtyard with views of the Fraser River and North Shore mountains. "There will also be a number of garden plots, and 50 per cent of the rooftop will be covered with 'green' landscaping," Jarvis says.

Each unit will have one underground parking stall, as well as space for bike storage. (Beyond

their doors, residents will be able to cycle or walk 5.5 kilometres of shoreline dike trails.)

Ora's exterior will be a mix of curvaceous concrete structures that take their cue from the Oval, and blend with pedestrian walkways and canal upgrades.

In keeping with the City of Richmond's emphasis on public art, Ora will feature a sculpture inspired by the high-tech designs of Italian architect Renzo Piano. This will consist of a seven-storey red and clear glass structure, and be located at the entrance of Phase 2.

Meanwhile, Jackson says, there has been tremendous support among developers for the neighbourhood expansion.

Jackson says Onni, along with other developers, will contribute to new roads, sidewalks and bicycle paths.

River Road will emerge as a new "High Street" for the village, and include wide sidewalks, coffee shops and other stores, public art and street furniture.

"Developers such as Onni will also be contributing to ... affordable housing and amenities such as daycare and public art," Jackson notes.

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