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A prize-worthy first

2010 was a very good year for MacPherson Walk developer

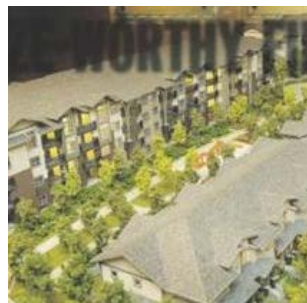
The Province

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For developer Hungerford Group, the MacPherson Walk project in Burnaby's Royal Oak neighbourhood represents a first -- and an award-winning one, at that.

MacPherson Walk, a 345-unit project overseen by partner Michael Hungerford, was the Vancouverbased firm's first attached-housing development, and recently won the 2010 Urban Development Institute award for best first project.

"It shone -this particular project," says Sandra Cawley, a real estate appraiser and co-chair of the UDI jury that reviewed 143 submissions in 29 categories ranging from "Best Industrial" to "Best in Show."



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Wayne Leidenfrost, PNG

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In early 2010, work was completed on the first two phases of MacPherson Walk, which is on seven acres east of Metrotown and south of Kingsway and the SkyTrain line.

Preparation of the "bare dirt" site -- requiring soil remediation, the purchase of a bit of railway line and additional land, and reconstruction of street and utility systems, costing a total of \$5 million - went smoothly. A public consultation process included direct-mail communication with nearby property owners, and a marketing campaign that featured mall posters, flagpole banners, and multilingual radio and TV ads.

The first two phases of MacPherson Walk (a third, to the north, is about to begin), run east-west between MacPherson and Buller avenues, with townhouses on the southern edge, and four-storey apartment buildings wrapped around the north and east sides.

Kelowna developer Randy Shier, another juror, attributes the project's success, in part, to the deft integration of the apartments and townhouses. Landscaping, public pathways, outdoor seating and play areas are accommodated in the spacious interior.

"This project filled all our criteria -- for greater density, greenways, good [building] standards and sustainability," says senior Burnaby planner Basil Lukson. "We had a very creative developer in terms of meeting the city's objectives, and they worked co-operatively."

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The design is "West Coast contemporary," with slightly pitched roofs, and details like cedar soffits or brackets under the eaves. Exteriors are of brick, hardy board and timber beams, cedar shingles and wrought-iron railings.

"A lot of the elements extend into the courtyards and the pedestrian experience," says architect Rob Ciccozzi of, for example, a series of handsome lampstands and lanterns, and wooden trellises and gates.

Interiors, ranging from studios of 490 square feet to townhouses of 1,376 square feet, are generally "open plan, " with a leaning to width and shallowness (rather than length and narrowness), maximizing natural light.

Given the prices -- \$215,000 to \$599,000 -- finishings both inside and out are of an unusually high quality.

BYU Design's Cheryl Broadhead says the Hungerford Group used superior granite in the kitchen, and marble in the baths. In ensuite bathrooms, porcelain tile extends from the floors to the walls -- not the usual practice in a project of this nature, Broadhead says.

When the complex was completed, the developer added a package of features that included closet lighting, metal cabinet drawers (rather than plastic), a soft-close function on cupboards, venetian blinds, extra case work around the windows, and superior outdoor lighting, at no additional cost.

"This project has raised the standard for this neighbourhood, and that was our goal," says Hungerford. "We have a lot of pride in what we do."

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