

The floor is yours Luxury condos allow owners to create own space from raw floor of building

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By Tracey Bryksa

Designed to be Winnipeg's most distinctive and prestigious address, 1 Wellington Crescent does not disappoint.

The condominium project, located at the intersection of Wellington Crescent and River Avenue, is indeed one of Winnipeg's finest buildings. The luxury high rise looms over Wellington Crescent, set on a prime lot on the banks of the Assiniboine River.

Designed by Cooper Rankin Architects, the architecture of the building is reminiscent of a more gracious time at the turn of century. The exterior is finished in a Tyndall limestone, accented by decorative wrought iron fences and rails and traditional stone detailing.

A 13-storey high rise, 1 Wellington is an exclusive community. There are only 12 residences -- one per floor in most cases. Each suite has approximately 3,250 square feet of living space, in addition to a 400 square foot exterior terrace, for a total of more than 3,600 square feet.

And square feet is what counts in this building. People don't get to choose from a few floor plans. For anywhere from \$550,000 to over \$1 million, buyers purchase a raw floor of the building to do with what they like. And there are virtually no limitations. "You take the space and do with it whatever works for you," says Roberta Weiss of Century 21 Bachman & Associates, who is marketing the building with her brother Lorne Weiss. "Everybody has a different idea on how to utilize the space."

Because they are starting from scratch, with little more than the bare walls, electrical and plumbing stacks, most buyers have hired a design architect to come up with the floor plan and create their own residence. It's much like building a new home, notes Weiss, except that home is housed within a building.

Built in 2002, most of 1 Wellington is currently occupied or under development. And with no building or design restrictions, the result has been a real mix of different styles and concepts from floor to floor.

"It's really fascinating when you take the same floor plate and throw it open to see what people come up with," says Weiss.

Because each floor is bare except for the structure itself, Weiss says it was very difficult for people to visualize a residence within the space. Even at more than 3,600 square feet, the floors appeared small when they were wide open.

And so a display suite was created to open potential buyers up to the possibilities of the space. Interestingly, Weiss says it wasn't until after the display suite was developed that most of the other floors of the building were sold.

Today, there are only two empty floors left for sale. The fourth floor is listed at \$550,000 and the 10th floor, which offers a spectacular treetop view of the river and city beyond, is \$750,000.

There's also the fully furnished display suite on the second floor that recently came on the market for a cool \$1.16 million. With raw floors selling for more than half a million, Weiss says the finished residences are all of comparable value, and many top the \$1 million mark.

The display suite is reminiscent of something you might find in Toronto or New York. Stepping off the elevator, double doors reveal a luxurious suite with a large living space and an incredible view of the city below. Weiss says each floor of the building was designed with extensive windows to the south and west to take full advantage of the sun exposure and the expansive views across the Assiniboine River.

The display suite was finished using only high-end materials. Gleaming high-grade porcelain floors, rounded walls with glass block accents and granite countertops are just some of the touches in this condominium. All of the duct work was incorporated in the ceiling design, allowing for interesting bulkheads with pot lighting and a detailed décor.

The main living area encompasses a roomy living room with a gas fireplace and a built-in wet bar and fridge area. The dining room at the back of the condominium is lined with almost floor to ceiling windows showcasing the tremendous view. A gourmet kitchen complete with all of the finishing touches contains a large island and an eating area set in a curved, glass block wall, which separates it from the dining room but allows natural light to filter in.

The master bedroom is large, with a wall of windows that look out over the 400-square-foot terrace. The terrace in each floor was designed to be enclosed and used as a three season room. Each floor also has a moveable wall facing the terrace, allowing buyers to expand their indoor space and enclose it completely or leave it open.

The master bedroom also contains a spacious ensuite. Pocket doors reveal a private toilet and bidet area. A Jacuzzi tub and an oversize glass shower complement the two separate sink areas. There's a dressing room, complete with lots of built-in shelves and drawers, finished with granite tops to match the bathroom counters.

"The detailing is all very special -- very high end," notes Weiss.

Another large room at the front of the condominium was designed to be used as another bedroom, den or home office. A third room is the guest bedroom with its own full bathroom.

A large coat room off the elevator, a two-piece powder room and a main floor laundry area round out the display suite's offering. At the heart of the suite, tucked behind the main elevator is the access to the service elevator. The service entrance was designed to allow direct access to the kitchen, for catering and other such purposes. Perhaps the most striking thing about the building itself is the completely private atmosphere. A 24-hour concierge, heated underground parking and onsite security provides the ultimate in privacy protection. The elevators are programmed with card controlled access and will only stop at your floor.

"It really is like being in your own house, except you are in a building," says Weiss.