

WESTCOASTHOMES

SATURDAY, MAY 9 | 2009 | EDITOR MICHAEL SASGES 604.605.2467 | HOMES@VANCOUVERSUN.COM



The third, or master-suite, floor in the Block show home is a declaration that suburban luxury — interior spaciousness — is possible in an urban residence. "Efficiency of space is something we really pride ourselves on," ParkLane's Krista Shirreff says to the question, what from Port Moody and Fort Langley and White

Rock has her employer brought to Vancouver. "We have our in-house senior designer, Grant Miller, who works on every single design and reviews every single community that we build, maximizing room sizes. The master bedroom bed is a king. The walk-in closet is enormous. The en suite is even bigger." That's

Jenny Wun, The Block's sales manager, sizing up the bed in the show home's master suite, left above. Below, the walk-in closet. Bottom, the study on the second floor is another example of a popular suburban innovation that elevates an upper-floor utility, a landing or hallway, with extra purpose.



NEW HOME Project Profile

ParkLane townhouses embrace surroundings

Block's metal, brick cladding an architectural salute to the original industrial purpose of Mount Pleasant

The Block

Project location: Mount Pleasant, Vancouver

Project size: 32 townhouses

Residence size: 2 bed + den — 3 bed + den; 1,192 sq. ft. — 2,101 sq. ft. — 1,340 sq. ft. — 1,680 sq. ft.

Prices: From \$569,900

Sales centre: 458 East 11th

Hours: Noon — 5 p.m. daily

Telephone: 604-875-8800

E-mail: jwun@parklane.com

Web: lifeontheblock.ca

Developer: ParkLane Homes (Biltmore) Ltd.

Architect: Stuart Howard

Interior designer: Cristina Oberti

Tentative occupancy: Fall, '09

BY MICHAEL SASGES

VANCOUVER SUN

A felicitous response by developer and architect to The Block's location makes this townhouse development an exemplary addition to the Vancouver residency opportunity.

The Block's exterior metal cladding and brickwork broadcast location in an original Vancouver neighbourhood, Mount Pleasant, with a history as much industrial as residential.

The decks on the townhouses' roofs broadcast higher-ground location. (The 50-metre elevation runs through the property.) The views of the downtown

high-rises, commercial and residential, and the North Shore mountains will lure Block households to their roofs in all months in good weather and keep them there in a glorious July or August.

"Where in the city can a woman put on a bikini and lay out on a chaise lounge without people staring at her? I'd be up there all summer," says Cristy Edmonds, the general sales manager at ParkLane Homes, an observation she shared in answering a question, tell *Vancouver Sun* readers your favourite feature in the townhouses.

The organizer of the Block sales and marketing campaign, ParkLane marketing manager Krista Shirreff, advances as her favourite a feature three floors below the decks, the private, secured passage between 25 of the 32 townhouses and the common parking garage.

"Lugging your groceries into an elevator and down a hallway is not the best of times," says Shirreff, an apartment resident herself. "Here it's almost like you have your own little single family home. You can drive in, you're safe and secure in your own parkade and, boom, you're right upstairs in your own kitchen unloading your groceries."

Every household will have its own front door, either on the street, Guelph Street or East 11th, or the courtyard that is a common feature of newer Vancouver townhouse developments.

Nineteen of the townhouses front on the courtyard and, therefore, face each other.

Nine of the townhouses front on Guelph Street and, across the street, the almost-100-year-old Nightingale elementary school.

Four of the townhouses front on East 11th.

Not only righteous possession of site makes The Block worth seeing.

Possession of a novel quality makes it worth knowing about: it is the first new-

home project in Vancouver in ParkLane's history — more than 5,500 homes, and more than 250 provincial and national awards, in almost 30 years.

ParkLane is firstly and primarily a suburban tract-home developer. More than that, it develops whole neighbourhoods of which Heritage Woods in Port Moody is the leading example. West-coast Homes reporters were probably visiting the new-home community twice a year a few years back.

The Block, therefore, is a small project for ParkLane. But it's an important, maybe critical, undertaking on the cusp of the company's fourth decade.

In that decade it will turn almost 130 acres in Vancouver's southeast corner into a multi-residence neighbourhood called, by all involved, East Fraserlands.

"I think definitely moving into the multi-family business is something ParkLane wanted to do from a corporate perspective before we moved on to the Fraser lands," Krista Shirreff says. "It's something very different."

ParkLane has not yet opened the Block sales centre and show home to the general public, Shirreff advises. To visit either, contact sales manager Jenny Wun at the telephone number or e-mail address published in the information box at the start of the story.





FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

The deck, above left, on the roof of the show home is one of the townhouse's four outdoor spaces. A deck on the master-suite, or third, floor, above right, is another. A juliet balcony on the second floor is a third. The patio at the front (the photo on page G1) is a fourth.

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THE BLOCK: ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

Mount Pleasant an eclectic mix of new and old, quirky and solid

Oldest home outside downtown,
unique shops among attractions

BY MICHAEL SASGES
VANCOUVER SUN

At city hall, Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood is "one of the most diverse communities in the city" and an "eclectic mix of new and old homes, industry, educational facilities and artist live/work studios."

The oldest single-family-detached residence in the city outside of the downtown is located there. It was built in 1889.

For Krista Shirreff, organizer of the Block sales and marketing campaign and a Mount Pleasant resident, the neighbourhood is singular. "It is a totally emerging, hip, authentic neighbourhood that has a very distinct character. It's not a cookie-cutter neighbourhood."

The neighbourhood's western boundary is Cambie Street; it's eastern boundary, Clark Drive. To the north, Great Northern Way and Second Avenue are the boundaries; to the south, Kingsway and 16th Avenue

Q Why is Lark located in Mount Pleasant rather than another Vancouver neighbourhood?

A The diversity of the area was really interesting to us. Many of our friends live in Mount Pleasant and some of them have businesses as well and to be a part of that community seemed like a charmed life. Five years ago when we were drafting our business plan we thought about other neighbourhoods in Vancouver and we didn't see ourselves fitting into those communities very well. At that time rent in this area wasn't too high and there seemed to be a lot of growth happening fairly quickly. So we thought we'd put our roots down in an area that was evolving in many different ways.

Q What is keeping Lark in the neighbourhood?

A That's a complicated question to answer briefly. Being this close to the Olympic Village is exciting: it means that the world will be watching and also visiting in February. We have really great landlords which is very rare in Vancouver. They own the AION art gallery which is now located on East 15th. It's great to have people who care about their property as landlords. This neighbourhood is our home so leaving it would be uprooting our lives, not just our business.

Q Are Lark's customers mainly your neighbours?

A Many of our best customers live in other areas. Lark is a destination for them. Vancouver is small and what we do here is so niche that not everyone understands our inspirations. Those who do understand are willing to travel to get to us.

Q What do visitors to the store who are your neighbours say to you about their neighbourhood?

A I find that as diverse as the people who live here are, their opinions are also as diverse. I hear people speak very positively about the area and the new businesses opening. Some people think the evolution of the area is too slow; some don't like to see change at all.

Q Is there a moment or an experience inside or outside the store that exemplifies, for you, the Mount Pleasant "sensitivity" or spirit?

A When my husband and I got Hunter, our English bulldog, we took her to Anti-social, the skate shop half a block up from Lark, and Michelle, the owner, pulled out a skateboard for her to ride. Michelle took pictures and posted them on her store website. The sense of togetherness among many of the business owners is amazing. We look after one another, no matter how different we are or how little we appear to have in common.



Veronika Baspaly in the Lark store: 'Some people think the evolution of the area is too slow; some don't like to see change at all.'

In the just released *Wallpaper* City Guide: Vancouver*, Mount Pleasant is "South Main," or SoMa, and "quirky," but "moving upmarket as condos and fashion stores spring up."

The oldest commercial building in the city outside the downtown is located there. It was built in 1892.

For Veronika Baspaly, Mount Pleasant is both the neighbourhood in which she makes her home and operates her business.

With her husband, Baspaly is the owner of the Lark clothing and accessories store, for men and women, a "singular experience of chic" in the opinion of the *Wallpaper** guide.

Baspaly has operated the store for more than four years, the last two from its current Main Street location. What follows are some of her thoughts on her 'hood.

Q Why are there so many retailers of singular, or unique, clothing and accessories on Main Street?

A Main Street is one of the few areas that has smaller commercial spaces unsuitable for chains and box stores, but perfect for specialty shops that are very niche. Unlike many of the other areas in Vancouver that have this benefit, Mount Pleasant also has a history of community. It was strongest 20 years ago when the "Shame the John's" campaign was started by local residents and businesses to counter the emergence of prostitution and drugs in the area. The Mount Pleasant business association was formed to create a link to city hall and also to make sure that the social problems that were turning the neighbourhood dangerous would not return. The evolution of this neighbourhood has brought it back to its roots which were that of a family friendly and small-business friendly community.

Q Why are there so many coffee shops along Main Street? And do you have a favourite?

A The real answer lies in antiquated liquor laws. Most cities have streets lined with pubs, lounges, bars, clubs, cafes, restaurants all serving alcohol in a responsible and adult way. In Vancouver the licensing is so strict that opening anything except a cafe is nearly impossible. Before the concept for

Lark came about we tried to open a cocktail bar in Mount Pleasant. I am now well schooled in the inner workings of city hall. It's such a shame because it really does stunt the city from flourishing in many ways.

I like the coffee at Gene Café. The espresso is strong and has a nice rich cream. In my opinion it's the best coffee in the city. I like the patio and coffee at JJBean, and the service is super fast.

Q Lastly, what do you want Vancouver Sun readers to know about Mount Pleasant?

A I want them to know that this area has so much Vancouver history. It's the first suburb, it's been through many eras of prosperity and neglect. It's on the rise of prosperity again and with the attentiveness of its caretakers, residents and business owners, it will only get better. Because it has always lived under the radar of the mainstream and big business it has been allowed to develop its very own character that is actually influenced by everyone that lives and works in it. It's nice to be in a place where everyone does actually matter.

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Readers who want to know more about Mount Pleasant's history will enjoy a city hall publication, *Mount Pleasant Historic Context Statement*, available at vancouver.ca on the Internet.