

GoGreen

Small steps make a *big difference*

BY TRACEY RAYSON



OUR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS LIFESTYLES HAVE PROGRESSED

exponentially since the day in 1970 when Kermit the Frog lamented in song, “It’s not easy being green.” Forty years later, our eco-friendly advancements prompt us to counter, “Sure it is.” Simply choosing to live in a condominium makes a positive contribution to the planet, regardless if it holds a certification level in a Green program. However, if it does — all the better.

By making the choice to be part of the condo living movement, you are contributing to the positive side of urban densification. Builders are pressed to construct with more imagination, vision, modeling and a greater awareness of what is possible.

TREAD LIGHTLY

There are many ways to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into your condo home and lifestyle. Some of the smallest steps can go a long way in making a difference to reduce your carbon footprint. It’s no secret that condo dwellers use fewer environmental resources and are more likely to walk, cycle, take advantage of a car-rental pool



PICTURED LEFT Lumen by Bucci Floor-to-ceiling low-E glass floods the home with natural light while keeping the home cool

or public transit. Of course, this reduction in vehicle use brings on health benefits too (for walkers and cyclists) and a decrease in greenhouse gases and air pollutants. Car sharing companies like Zipcar are convenient and affordable, and of course, eco-friendly. Each Zipcar takes 15 to 20 personally owned vehicles off the road.

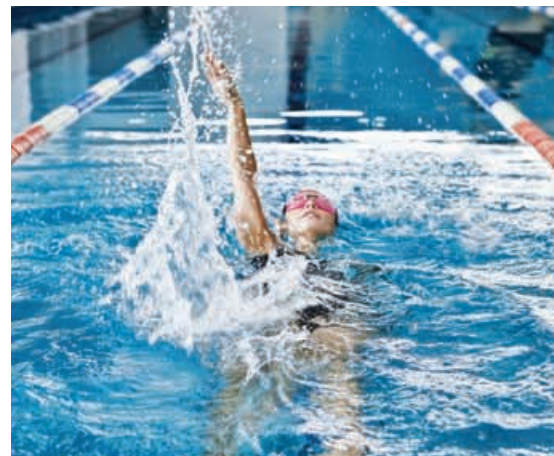
Rent by the hour, by the day or by the shopping spree. Also check out eRidesShare.com for ride-sharing partners in your area, or the Co-operative Auto Network in Vancouver (A+ rating with the BBB) for pay-as-you-go or monthly plans.

MI CASA, SU CASA

Not everyone is suited for the Mary/Rhoda phenomenon, the daily pop-in or the “what’s mine is yours” principle. However, high-density living does foster a sense of community because people are more inclined to get to know their neighbours (there are more opportunities of chance meetings: the elevator, the lobby, parking garage and the mail room); residents are also of the mind to shop locally and support neighbourhood businesses, regular encounters that may cultivate friendships and help sustain local jobs and keep B.C. products available, for instance local produce. Additionally, master-planned communities leave more open land for other pedestrian-friendly avenues, trails, parks and greenspace. Not to mention less commute time which translates to more family time – perhaps an opportunity to take advantage of a development’s shared amenities, be it a games room, rooftop garden, multi-media room, fitness centre or swimming pool.

SUPERIOR INTERIOR

When it comes time to renovate, decorate or merely update your condo’s interior, keep sustainability and quality at the forefront. From saving money to saving the planet one choice at a time, your interior design selections, materials and furnishings can make for a healthy, energy-efficient home. Most likely your space will be fewer square feet than your previous single-detached home and therefore your first savings are likely to come from a decrease in heating and electricity costs. You can choose solar shades and window treatments that provide effective solutions for heat rejection and UV protection, and heat loss in cold weather. Keep your air quality high-quality by using low-volatile organic compound (VOC) paints, otherwise you may be subjected to toxic gases that lower your indoor air quality and are often the cause of allergic reactions and respiratory troubles. Flooring holds many Green options too: hardwood, reclaimed wood, cork, bamboo, ceramic tile or even wool carpets for their durability (and they’re biodegradable) – studies show more than 200 chemicals are used in the manufacturing of most synthetic carpets.



PICTURED RIGHT **Levo by Unimet** 60,000-sq.-ft. rooftop deck includes paths, waterfalls and streams for total escape from busy urban life

PICTURED BOTTOM **Affinity by Bosa Development Corp.** Steps to the skytrain and shopping, Affinity offers a fully walkable lifestyle

PICTURED ON PAGE 31 **Montage at Waterstone by HJ Properties** The Club at Waterstone encourages community living and incorporates great outdoor space

POWER TRIP

Even if your condo isn't outfitted with the latest energy-efficient product models or ENERGY STAR appliances, you can be diligent in saving energy by making simple changes. For laundry, making the switch to cold water can save 50 per cent of the energy used in every load, according to the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance (CEEAA). For instance, the energy savings for Tide Coldwater have been verified and the product is recommended by CEEAA as energy efficient. Also, by choosing "Future Friendly" products you save the planet with less waste, less energy and less packaging. Don't forget to recycle your plastics, paper and metals.





**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT:**

Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance
energyefficiency.org

**Co-operative
Auto Network in Vancouver**
cooperativeauto.net

David Suzuki Foundation
david Suzuki.org

ENERGY STAR
energystar.gov

**Natural Resources Canada –
EnerGuide**
oee.nrcan.gc.ca

Recycling Council of BC
rcbc.bc.ca

Zipcar
zipcar.com

Eliminating the inconspicuous sources that continue to draw power, even when your gadgets, electronics and appliances are hibernating, is another good conservation adjustment. If they remain plugged into an outlet they are consuming electricity. For example, you will be paying for your Plasma TV, one watt; LCD TV, two watts; VCR, between two and seven watts; digital cable box, 26 watts; radio, two watts; and audio minisystem, six watts. Of course, it may not be practical to unplug some of these items daily but if you vacation or leave home for extended periods, it's a sensible and energy-saving idea. More deceptive is the energy wasted in your home office. Make the choice to leave these devices turned on and you'll

use up the following power: ink-jet printer, nine watts; laser printer, 39 watts; computer monitor CRT, 70/LCD, 27 watts; fax, four watts; laptop, 22 watts and desktop computer, 68 watts. Reduce the standby by using switched power strips; if you use your home office equipment throughout the day, ensure energy saving settings are on.

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