

**Efficiencies for Marketability**

With hundreds of building design layouts, offering only three colour schemes and eight kitchen layouts for 737 homes helped keep the designs consistent and create efficiencies. “It was much more manageable to inform consumers during the marketing phase,” says Bob Rennie, Principal of Rennie Marketing Systems, the firm handling sales of the suites. Throughout the project, bathroom and kitchen sizes created a brand standard – for example, most master bedrooms have ensuite baths. “We didn’t want to overwhelm people with too many variations and we had to select a very high-end spec as we were building all 737 at once with no customizing allowed,” says Rennie.

**Appliances and Kitchens for Marketability and Sustainability**

“Vancouver consumers are extremely intelligent. If you’re asking a premium dollar they need premium product,” says Harvey Reehal, Principal Director of Inform Projects. The suites have name brand appliances such as SubZero fridges. “We’re wearing green like jewelry,” explains Rennie. “It really looks good but I need mainstream to incorporate green initiatives; I need ‘Sub-Zero’ to come out and say they have solved something in the energy department. Then I’ve got name brands doing it. When you’re selling condos at a million bucks people want name brand.”

All of the kitchens were imported from Germany. When asked about sourcing appliances locally, Reehal explains that “kitchens and bathrooms are a commodity and we don’t yet have a local industry that provides the high quality appliances that people want. In Europe, they build longer-lasting products... they have a culture of design that relies on technology that is not available in North America.”

Reehal says Europe often not only provides higher quality products with sophisticated design, but also produces less manufacturing waste. “In Europe, the machinery is much more efficient with material. I would guess that you can hold in your hand the amount of waste from a 10x8 foot unit,” says Reehal. He says their durability supports sustainable goals. “The products are not inexpensive but they are a premium product designed to last 50 years. The aesthetics are classic and neutral and with high quality material you will find low replacement.”

**Innovative Air Ducting**

New design solutions in this project included air ducting that would save energy. A fresh air duct, which is common in a kitchen, loses a lot of heat. This innovative air duct directs the air from the fresh air duct to the fridge cavity, heating the air and releasing it into the kitchen through a venting system underneath the fridge.



**Design Challenges**

The main constraints or design challenges revolved around the overall scale of the project and timeline. All buildings required concepts, working drawings and onsite presence in overlapping time frames, which was an unusual challenge. “Remaining consistent in design throughout and providing the needed attention to the clients, the consultants and the contractors was a constant requirement.

Also challenging was meeting everyone’s expectations that such a high profile project brings, from Millennium’s desire for outstanding design, to the architect’s hope for design integration, to the consultant’s requirements for collaboration, to the marketing department’s need for a sellable product – and achieving an interior that the City can be proud to showcase to the world,” explains Rankin.

**Setting a Precedent**

“The most exciting aspect of this design is the precedent it sets in our community, not only with those involved – such as the developer and designers – but also with the general public. Our hope is to build recognition that there does not need to be a choice between good design and environmentally sensitive products,” says Rankin.

“Although it was a challenge at times to have the industry understand this, in the end we were able to have a great deal of innovation presented in terms of materials and overall design.”

Bob Rennie comments, “I believe this is the model that everyone is going to watch. The Olympic Village is going to show that the consumer in a higher-end demographic values green and that name brands and green do not have to be mutually exclusive.”

Left: High quality, long-lasting and energy-efficient appliances contribute to the sustainability goals of the community.

**PROFILE**

**Bob Rennie**

Rennie Marketing Systems

Bob Rennie and Rennie Marketing Systems joined the Millennium Water team even before Millennium was confirmed as the developer of the Olympic Village. With 34 years of marketing experience, Rennie has established a practice of creating a buyer profile for developments. This entails effectively translating sustainability by using practical and simple statements related to a buyer’s real estate decision. These include, for example, “You are going to need it [sustainability] for resale,” and, “Soon, you will compare energy costs between older and newer developments the way you now compare homeowner dues and maintenance fees.” In this way, Rennie Marketing Systems has joined the hundreds of others who have helped realize Shahram Malek and Peter Malek’s vision of a sustainable, marketable community on the shores of Southeast False Creek.

Rennie not only focuses on the sustainable use of energy, but highlights that sustainability encompasses a diversified community of incomes and social cultures. “I believe emphatically that Vancouver’s Millennium Water Olympic Village will be recorded in the history books as the development that the world will use as a benchmark for future sustainability,” he says.