

What does sustainability look like?

That question was debated thoroughly by members of Millennium’s design team as they worked to define the appearance of a community the company would be building from scratch on the shore of SEFC. At the time, environmental buildings sometimes celebrated their ‘eco’ pedigrees with an exhibitionist aesthetic, not unlike the way early hybrid cars and Birkenstock sandals departed from tradition to herald their difference. But Millennium was seeking something more enduring.

“We didn’t want sustainability to have a passing look to it,” says Millennium’s Peter Malek. “It could be different even from 2006 to 2012. We wanted something more timeless, so we aimed instead for a ‘quiet sustainability.’ So the design team was asked to come up with buildings that would not become dated.”

Millennium gave the team a number of elements to work with. They provided classic images of solid European buildings with colonnades and

asked for similar arcades (recessed walkways along the front of the building that shelter storefronts and entryways). They favoured modern curved glass facades, and continuous balconies that would support passive design while maximizing indoor-outdoor living. They sought a blend of materials that would mix classic with modern. And they asked the architects to do their best to reduce the potential “boxy” look of the rectilinear street layout.

“We provided them with a paradox,” says Malek. “Very modern images and very classic ones, to effectively create a ‘modern classic.’ Plus we asked them to make the Village appear that it was not all built at once. This Village is on the waterfront, on a prominent site, and it will be on centre stage, so we wanted architecture that Vancouver would be proud to display to the world. We have to give the design team a lot of credit. The solutions didn’t always come overnight, but they rose to these challenges, and we think they pulled it off very well. You can see these ideas throughout the design of Millennium Water.”



Curving glass and continuous balconies, such as those shown on the Marina Baie des Anges in southern France (right) and the Yve Apartment building in Melbourne (middle), were two features encouraged by Millennium. The developer also requested arcades for the buildings fronting the plaza, to provide the classic feel and vibrant street life of European buildings, such as those shown in Paris (main and left).



“seamless mix of housing types”



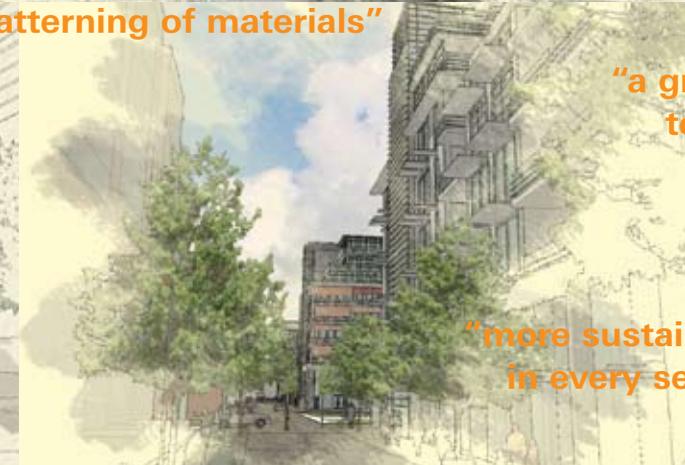
“an amazing set of opportunities to meet people”



“a safe place to play”



“the nicest day care in the city”



“terraces, textures, patterning of materials”

“a great place to live”



“more sustainable in every sense”

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After years of visioning, planning and specifying passive design parameters, it was time to design the actual buildings that would create a new community on the shores of Southeast False Creek.

The Millennium team included architects from Merrick Architecture and gBL Architects, and grew to include Nick Milkovich, Arthur Erickson, Rob Ciccozzi, Walter Francl, Brian Sim and the firm of Acton Ostry.

Their job was to breathe three-dimensional life into the idea of a new type of urban development – high density, highly livable, sustainable.

The process began with integrated design meetings – where the team arrived at a set of principles that would be applied across all parcels – to articulate tangible elements of sustainable design and to provide some consistency from building to building.

From a mostly abandoned and post-industrial site, architects conjured up the Olympic Village, filling in details from cladding and courtyards to gardens and glazing. This section tells the story of these emerging designs.