

THE DAILY COURIER

The little city that can

The Daily Courier (Kelowna)
Wednesday, February 9, 2005
Page: C1 / FRONT
Section: Business
Byline: Steve MacNaull
Source: The Daily Courier

Vancouver-based marketer Mark **Belling** praises Kelowna as a small city with a big appetite.

"In the grand scheme of things, Kelowna's population is small at 100,000, yet it's a destination city competing on the world stage," said **Belling**, who spoke at a recent meeting of the Kelowna branch of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

"As a result, it has every kind of housing imaginable to attract people from elsewhere -- master-planned, single-family-home neighbourhoods, upscale townhouse projects, highrises, lease land and resort-style condominiums."

Belling, president of Fifth Avenue Real Estate Marketing and Recreational Project Marketing, says Abbotsford, too, has a population of about 100,000, yet it doesn't have the same resort draw or housing mix.

Kelowna with its moderate four-season weather, stunning scenery and recreational lifestyle has capitalized on the baby boomer demand for retirement, second, vacation and investment homes.

"Really, the most progressive developers are no longer selling houses, but lifestyle expectations," said **Belling**.

"Developers have to exceed expectations from first contact to the perfect sales experience and perfect delivery of the home to happiness after move in."

Thus said, today's consumer still expects a superior brick-and-mortar result with their lifestyle.

"Oh yes, the new standards are stainless-steel appliances, granite countertops, tile, hardwood, high-end fixtures and finishings, double garage, pool, home office, view and lock and leave opportunities," says **Belling**.

While most of this happens in the higher-price echelons, **Belling** says great developers can also do it in affordable formats.

For instance, while **Belling** was here, he toured The Verve site in Glenmore where four-storey condominium buildings will go up attracting people of all ages with quality finishings and prices for a two-bedroom unit starting at \$130,000.

Belling's Fifth Avenue is handling the marketing for two local developments billed as quality affordable.

Canyon Ridge on Gellatly Road on the Westside is a neighbourhood of lock-and-leave view duplexes and single-family homes targeted at retirees who will use them as a half- or three-quarter-time residences and leave them for extended holidays or winters in the south.

The Ellis condo project in Penticton is attracting buyers in all age groups who appreciate the starting price of \$149,900.

Belling also recognized developers who are meeting and exceeding the expectations of those with \$500,000, \$1 million and more to spend on a custom home, a luxury unit in a highrise or a resort home on the lake, at the ski hill or at golf course.

"There are buyers from Dubai who are spending \$700,000 on an upscale house at Predator Ridge (golf community) and only using it two weeks of the year," he said.

While **Belling** generally speaks flatteringly about Kelowna, he warns of possible problems on the horizon.

"There's the potential for oversupply and although interest rates are expected to stay low, I imagine prices will have to plateau soon," he said.

"There's also a skilled labour shortage and that could hinder a developer's ability to finish projects on time, on budget and with the high quality promised."

© 2005 The Okanagan Valley Newspaper Group. All rights reserved.

Illustration:

• Colour Photo: Gary Nylander, The Daily Courier / Kelowna is a desirable resort town with every kind of housing imaginable, says Mark **Belling** of Fifth Avenue Real Estate Marketing and Recreational Project Marketing.

Idnumber: 200502090011

Edition: Final

Story Type: Business

Length: 494 words

Illustration Type: Colour Photo

