

188 Keefer 156 condos in an 21-storey tower by Westbank

Sun

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Lesley Kim, top right, with the model of the mixed-use project 188 Keefer. She will live in a two-bedroom unit on the 18th floor. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun

188 KEEFER

Project size: 156 homes on floors three through 21 of a mixed-use building

Address: 188 Keefer St, Vancouver

Residence size: 1 bedroom, 1 bedroom + den, 2 bedrooms, 2 bedrooms + den; 456 - 1,268 sq. ft

Prices: \$284,900 - \$859,900

Sales Centre: 190 Keefer St, Vancouver

Hours: noon - 6 p.m., Sat - Thurs

Telephone: 604-620-2018

Email: info@westbank.com

Architect: W.T. Leung

Interior Design: Westbank

Web: 188keefers.com

Warranty: 2-5-10

Occupancy: May 2015

Lesley Kim has strong ties to 188 Keefer, a new mixed use development at Main and Keefer in Chinatown. Her father's company, Trans Pac Group, owned the site now being developed in partnership with Westbank; she works for Magnum Projects, which is marketing the homes; and she plans to live in the building once it's completed.

Currently living in the Woodward's building, also a Westbank project, Kim will be moving into a two-bedroom corner suite on the 18th floor of 188 Keefer. "I can see the site from my apartment building, so I'm waiting for us to break ground," she says. "I want to take pictures every day and send that out to my father."

She sees 188 Keefer as being a pioneer development in Chinatown, much as Woodward's was in Gastown. "The businesses in Gastown, whether it's the culinary industry or in retail, there's been such a resurgence of life in the area," she says. "Before, it used to be just some tourists at certain hours of the day. It's a great place to live in, and I see this area only being an extension of that."

The area is a draw for many buyers, along with the project's affordability, says Alexa Paukkunen, sales and marketing director at Magnum Projects. "I think people are excited about it because you still have this neighbourhood that has its authenticity and doesn't feel like a yuppie town, but is still that extension of downtown."

The least-expensive homes, starting at \$239,900, sold out July 6, the day they went on the market; about half the total number of 156 suites are sold. At time of writing, the lowest priced homes still available started at \$284,900. The most expensive, a 1,115-square-foot two-level penthouse with two roof terraces (500 square feet of outdoor living), was \$859,900.

To make purchasing at 188 Keefer more achievable, Vancity is offering mortgages with a five per cent deposit for buyers who will occupy the suites. There are no resale restrictions, but investors cannot buy multiple units. Twenty-two suites will be rental units for seniors, subsidized through a partnership between Vancity and S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

"We've found a lot of people are driven to the higher-floor homes just for the views and the finishing level," says Paukkunen. Tower homes (floors 10-21) will have Miele and Blomberg appliances, Corian countertops and walnut or oak engineered wood flooring. To keep prices down, podium homes (floors three through nine) will have LG and GE appliances, granite countertops and light oak vinyl flooring. Because buildings in Chinatown tend to be low rise, views are unobstructed. Prospective buyers can go up to the roof of the presentation centre to see for themselves.

Chinatown's traditional lowrise character informed architect W.T. Leung's design: a building that would fit into the context of Chinatown where there's a mixture of old and an emergence of new. "You cannot really do a glass tower," he says.

"It's not Yaletown. It's not downtown Vancouver. It's not West End."

There is actually no authentically Chinese architecture in Chinatown, he explains, but rather an eclectic collection of historic older buildings characteristic of North American Chinatowns. The deeply recessed verandas are reminiscent of the Portuguese colonial buildings in southern China where many immigrants came from.

At 188 Keefer, recessed verandas have been incorporated into a six-storey brick podium that takes its cue from the HSBC building (designed by Leung in the '90s) directly across Main Street. The main floor retail, second-floor offices and residential above allow for a true mixed-use building with people working in the daytime and residents providing life after hours, notes Leung. "With Chinatown up till now, at around five or six o'clock, it's largely deserted because there's no one living here. When you have a lot more residential, it's a 24-hour community." There will be typical Chinatown fabric awnings over the shops and space for neon blade signs to recapture the Chinatown of the '50s, '60s and the early '70s.

"What I'm trying to do is bring back a little bit of the old mixed with the new," says Leung. Along Keefer, the roof height steps down twice. This section is faced with glazed red panels and contains the entrance to the building: a Chinese gate opening into a landscaped courtyard complete with a koi pond and marble drum stones.

All units have deck or balcony; a few are enclosed but most are open. There are also two common roof gardens; one on the second level off the seniors' section and another on the eighth level off a common lounge. The 2,500-square-foot upper deck will have a fireplace, barbecue pit, seating, garden plots and a children's play area. The adjacent lounge will include a living room with flat screen TV, a kitchen and dining table plus a fitness room.

The tower is set back from the street, seeming to float above the podium. Leung sees it as symbolic of the new emergence of Chinatown architecture. It is faced with board formed concrete that has vancouver bamboo architecture and is the backdrop for a public art installation by Vancouver artist Ron Terada: backlit letters spelling "un seen." A vertical stack of bay windows framed in red glazing, says Leung, is an exclamation mark or signal proclaiming, "Here we are!"



Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



An artist's rendering of a common outdoor space which will have a fireplace, seating area and barbecue. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



The project was designed by architect W.T. Leung, who also designed the HSBC building at Main and Keefer, above. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



188 Keefer will be near many amenities and attractions, including the Dr. Sun Yat-sen Classical Chinese Garden. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



The sales office for the 188 Keefer homes, which has been met with an enthusiastic response from buyers. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



The style of the building is seen by the architect as being symbolic of the new emergence of Chinatown architecture. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun



Street-level shops with awnings and space for neon signs will recapture the Chinatown of decades ago. "What I'm trying to do is bring back a little bit of the old mixed with the new," says W.T. Leung, who designed the HSBC building across the street from 188 Keefer in the 1990s. Photograph by: Ward Perrin, PNG, Special To The Sun