

SPONSORED BY TAPESTRY AT WESBROOK VILLAGE



PHOTOS: TAPESTRY AT WESBROOK VILLAGE

Tapestry at Wesbrook Village is an upscale residential development that offers services far beyond most condominium complexes.

Tapestry weaves a spell at UBC

TAKING A HOSPITALITY APPROACH TO SENIORS LIVING TAKES THE STING OUT OF DOWNSIZING

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SPECIAL TO THE SUN

It's a life-altering decision to move on from a home where you may have raised a family and lived for decades. Many approaching their golden years resist the idea of going into an assisted-living facility for fear of losing their independence in an institutionalized setting.

That's why communities like Tapestry at Wesbrook Village are hoping to change the definition of what it means to live in seniors' housing.

The two towers of the development look very much like an upscale residential development. They are connected with a gracious lobby manned

around the clock by attentive concierges. There's a gym — complete with personal trainers — on an upper floor, as well as a communal kitchen that can be used for cooking demonstrations. There is enough polished stone and fancy millwork in the suites to satisfy even the most sophisticated of tastes. Outside, residents can putter in the gardens or host a barbecue on the terrace.

However, the services available go far beyond what you might find in most condo buildings. People can also take advantage of a beauty salon and spa, play a couple of rounds in a golf simulator, or engage in some mental stimulation in the brain fitness centre. Housekeeping is provided weekly, with medical staff on call around the clock. Medical treatments are delivered privately in the homes of residents, rather than requiring people to move to a hospital wing if they are ill.

A community shuttle can take



people around to various neighbourhood destinations, although grocery shopping, banking, and medical appointments are all within very easy walking distance. A private car with driver can also be booked for an additional cost.

The meal options at Tapestry may be where it differs the most significantly from other seniors' facilities. Residents can cook for themselves in the fully-equipped kitchens in their individual suites, have meals brought to their suites, meet up with friends at the on-site pub, or entertain friends and family at the restaurant-style dining room. There are no set meal times and there is no assigned seating. The cost of the restaurant meals are debited individually from a monthly credit, much like the dining plan used by students living in dorms.

The executive chef — who previously worked at high-end Vancouver restaurant Italian Kitchen — sources produce directly from the nearby UBC Farm and refreshes the menu quarterly, with input from the residents.

"A lot of facilities come from a nursing or hospital style approach," explains Catherine Wallbank, vice-president of operations for Leisure Care. That firm manages Tapestry for developer Concert Properties. "We think about it from the hospitality perspective, and offering opportunities to enjoy life to the fullest."

It's an approach that suits 73-year-old Carol Byram and her 68-year-old husband Adrian. They purchased a home at Tapestry at Wesbrook after Adrian decided to return to school, and after Carol read a September 2010 Vancouver Sun profile of the project. After a long tech and entrepreneurial career in the U.S., Adrian is now working

toward a PhD in neuroethics at UBC. Carol is busy on the strata council and various committees for the building, as well as her work with Ballet BC.

"I tell people that living here is like being on a cruise ship or at the Four Seasons with all your friends," the former communications director for Sony Electronics says. "There is something to do all the time if you want to."

With isolation being a known hazard for seniors, Byram says she doesn't understand people who hang on to living in single-family homes until the bitter end. Activities at Tapestry include movie nights, day trips, fitness classes, and musical performances. She also says there is no shortage of people to go for a walk or meal with.

Byram enjoys being part of the larger community at UBC, saying there is a noticeable energy on campus as students stream in and out of classes. She volunteered to be a subject for a study examining the effects of companionship and exercise on aging. She is also involved in Project Chef, where students from a nearby elementary school come and cook with residents.

She often runs into her neighbours Yul and Joanne Kwon in the gym. Yul is 79, and Joanne is 77.

Yul has qualified to run the Boston Marathon next year, and is an adjunct professor of economics at SFU, after decades teaching at the University of Regina and a university in Australia. He tends to have his daughter accompany him on his longer runs through Pacific Spirit Park.

"I am writing a book, so I am too busy to take advantage of all of these programs right now," he laughs. "But Joanne participates, and as time goes on, we appreciate that the events are available to us."

The lifestyle

Name: Tapestry at Wesbrook Village

Location: 3338 Wesbrook Mall, UBC

Project size: Two 7-storey towers; 46 condos and 134 — 154 rental units (some suites can be combined into larger units)

Condo size: 1 bed + den 854 — 905 sq. ft; 2 bed 1,084 — 1,268 sq. ft; 2 bed + den 1,379 — 1,403 sq. ft

Developer: Concert Properties

Web: www.discovertapestry.com

Dining options: restaurant-style dining room, pub, private dining room, room service, outdoor barbecue on terrace

Social events: games night, Wii tournaments, art gallery tours, concerts, movie nights, lectures, day trips

Physical education: personal training, walking groups, tai chi, 'sit fit'

Conveniences: weekly housekeeping, shuttle service, car service with driver, valet parking, move-in coordinator, hotel-style concierge who can assist with booking appointments and making dinner reservations

They purchased their home three years ago at the urging of their son, and at the time, had no idea it was even a seniors residence. He and Carol agree that downsizing directly to Tapestry was the right choice to make, because of all of the amenities and the peace of mind offered by the staff.

They also say they feel too young to be in a seniors' facility, but are inspired by some of the older residents, including a very active 90-year-old and a lively 95-year-old.

"I like the fact that we're here, because as we get older, we're surrounded by people who understand what's happening with us, and how to deal with some of the issues," points out Byram. "In the meantime, there is so much to enjoy."

Leisure Care's Wallbank says they would be delighted if other seniors' facilities would follow the Tapestry lead in supporting a rich sense of community, and active, happy, healthy seniors.

"It's time for this industry to move forward. We wouldn't be upset at all if our competitors copied us, because we think that would be great for society in general. Plus, it will just keep pushing us to keep finding new ways to enhance the lives of seniors."

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