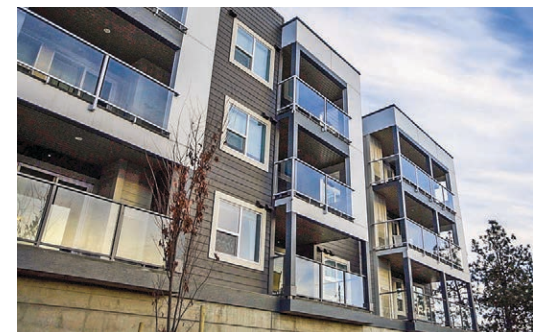




U-Five

by LAURA WALKER



Over the past decade, the University of British Columbia (UBC) has made significant investment in expanding its Okanagan Campus, with the student population nearly tripling during this time period. As UBC's Okanagan Campus continues to expand, so too does the nearby U-District residential area, intended to provide housing to the University's growing number of students.

Among the newest additions to the U-District community is U-Five, which opened its doors to residents in September at the beginning of the 2018 school year.

"We were excited to create the ultimate university living experience – privately-owned, modern condominiums within close walking distance to the campus. U-Five adds to the success of our U-One, U-Two and U-Three buildings," explains Luke Turri from Mission Group.

The four-storey, 72-unit condominium is built into a hillside overlooking Hwy 97. "Any traffic driving through the Okanagan can look up and see these buildings, so the modern design utilizes large-scale design elements – striking, simple elements you can see from a distance," explains Jim Meiklejohn of Meiklejohn Architects Inc.

"We also tried to relate the design to other recent UBC building projects that feature a modern, clean look," says Shirley Ng, also of Meiklejohn Architects Inc.

The "Campus Modern" architecture is punctuated with various parapets and asymmetrical frames that Turri explains provides "a pleasing rhythm to the exterior."

The building's length encouraged the design team to separate the building into two portions, explains Meiklejohn, adding, "we added a gateway between the two sections, so that

residents could circulate between the two buildings internally."

"It's a nice architectural feature," says Cameron Graham of RJC Engineers, noting that structural design was completed by 4D Engineering, which merged with RJC Engineers in May of 2017, in the midst of the project.

The building's wood frame sits on top of a concrete parkade structure that is largely hidden within the hill on which it is built, exposed only on one side of the building at the underground parking entrance.

"The building was designed to run parallel with the contours of the site to achieve sensitive integration. Landscaping and terraced retaining walls allow for esthetically-pleasing screening of the structured parkade on the downslope side," explains Turri.

Materials used on the exterior of the building are described by Meiklejohn and Ng as "fairly conventional" for the area, including a combination of brick masonry, HardiePanels and stucco. "According to the environment and zoning, we needed materials that were fire retardant, non-combustible," Meiklejohn explains of the building's cladding.

Colour was also a strong consideration in exterior material selection. "As the area and the Okanagan can be quite grey in the winter time, we wanted to attribute some colour to the building to brighten up the neighbourhood," says Meiklejohn.

"The entry is framed with landscaped areas to create a welcoming approach," says Turri. Upon entering the building, residents are greeted by an expansive, double-height entry lobby. "There's a lot of glass to keep the area bright and connect the space to the outside, all while ensuring it is safe and secure, as there are students

entering the building at all hours of the day and night," adds Meiklejohn. "We wanted the buildings to be very bright, open and safe."

"In the common areas, we created student lounges so that residents could get out of their rooms to study or entertain so as not to disturb roommates," says Lisa Perry of i3 design. These spaces are intended to create a community feeling within the building.

"We used accent paint colours throughout the common areas to cheer them up, and used a dark navy paint around the elevator doors and on the suite doors," says Perry. "In the common lounges, we pulled the bright blue and gold out of the stripes in the main carpet and used the colours to animate the spaces. We picked up the same accent colours in the furniture and artwork."

Interior suites embrace a modern colour palette and are outfitted with sleek condo finishes that are both durable and low maintenance. "Both i3 design and Mission Group try to make responsible choices in selecting finishes whenever we can," says Perry, noting that all the paint used in the building is low VOC, while the common area carpet is "very environmentally friendly." Made from recycled plastic bottles, the carpet is said to be stain-proof and wear-proof, and features a felt-like underpad for additional sound absorption from the corridors to the suites. "It is virtually indestructible with the exception of burns," adds Perry.

As the building is largely intended for rental to UBC students, it was imperative to have the project completed in advance of the start of the school year, creating a tight timeline for construction. "The size of the building, topographical constraints, and the particularly large amount of snowfall during the winter months created a

challenge for our construction team to maintain this completion schedule. We are pleased to say that we were able to deliver the project on-time and on-budget," says Turri.

Prefabrication was one method of helping to keep the project's timelines on track, explains Meiklejohn. "There was a lot of off-site pre-fabrication of the wall panels," he says, noting that all the lumber framing was brought to site in panels.

The use of Hardie siding was another help in keeping the project on-time, explains Meiklejohn, adding, "unlike other materials, such as stucco, it can be installed in any type of weather, allowing work to continue throughout the winter months."

"The U-Five community was a very rare opportunity for private investors to own a part of the overall UBC Okanagan community, and will no doubt maintain strong value for years to come," says Turri. **A**

LOCATION

775 Academy Way, Kelowna, B.C.

**OWNER/DEVELOPER/
GENERAL CONTRACTOR**
Mission Group

ARCHITECT
Meiklejohn Architects Inc.

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
RJC Engineers / 4D Engineering

MECHANICAL CONSULTANT
Reinbold Engineering Group

ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT
Falcon Engineering Ltd.

INTERIOR DESIGN CONSULTANT
i3 design

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
BENCH Site Design

TOTAL SIZE
61,300 square feet

TOTAL COST
Undisclosed