

Like an English country garden

For vacations or retirement, the Chelsea
in Victoria beckons Albertans

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To Concert Properties CEO David Podmore, the most alluring aspect of the luxury residential project that his company is building in central Victoria is the juxtaposition of the quiet, leafy neighbourhood with the city's downtown.

The 66-unit luxury apartment complex, dubbed Chelsea for its echoes of Englishness, will be built in Fairfield, a community nestled between residential Rockland to the east, James Bay to the west, Beacon Hill Park and the Dallas Road shoreline to the south, and the downtown to the northwest.

"What really excites me about the project is the proximity to the downtown with its amenities and attractions," Podmore says. "You're basically two blocks removed — in an established neighbourhood with a lot of character."

From the mid-1800s, Sir James Douglas, the Hudson's Bay Company chief factor in the West and B.C.'s first governor, owned a farm in Fairfield, as did James Trutch, the province's first lieutenant-governor. Many of the homes here went up during the building boom

of the Edwardian period, leaving Fairfield with a settled, old-world ambiance.

All this, says Podmore, makes the location on Burdett Street in north Fairfield both unusual and coveted. He points to Christ Church Cathedral, a block away, rebuilt in the 1920s in an early neo-gothic style. And the fact that the Chelsea will be on the site of the former Mount St. Mary Hospital, operated by the Sisters of St. Ann as the hospital for elderly patients for more than 50 years.

Though the hospital was demolished in 2003, a perimeter wall on the half-hectare site, dating to 1890 when a mansion stood on the property, has been designated a heritage structure by the City of Victoria and retained. Fronting onto Vancouver Street, the wall is stone topped with brick. Along Burdett Avenue it's made of brick and wrought iron, with two entry points. The entire structure has undergone two months of stabilization.

An English-style courtyard will be part of the landscaping. And a magnificent walnut tree that has long graced the property has been lovingly preserved.

"The cathedral, the streets, the old wall, the well established trees — all of this gives this property the feeling of a (nearby) Rockland, or a Shaughnessy in Van-



The six-storey Chelsea's traditional exterior reflects its historic neighbourhood.

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Wrought-iron gates are part of a perimeter brick-and-stone wall system built in the late 1800s and carefully preserved.

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couver, or a Glenora in Edmonton," Podmore says.

Podmore sees the Chelsea as suitable perhaps for homeowners who are downsizing, or as a primary or second home for Albertans drawn to B.C.'s climate and lifestyle.

Meanwhile, downtown Victoria is expanding on its one-note, Anglo-in-aspic image and acquiring a more up-to-date character. Chic stores have opened, along with restaurants drawing on the increasingly sophisticated farm produce, artisan foods and quality beverages from Vancouver Island and other parts of B.C.

Several neighbourly hubs are an easy amble from the Chelsea. The Harris Green Village includes the Italian restaurant Zambri's and upscale Market on Yates. The Cook Street Village counts The Beagle Pub and Moka House among its casual attractions. And Fort Street, known for its antique shops, has added some fashionable eateries.

"You're close to everything—yet you're in a traditional neighbourhood," Podmore adds.

In a classic design by Davidson Yuen Simpson Architects, the exterior of the six-storey concrete Chelsea will combine brick and stone.

See CHELSEA / J2



Shaker-wood cabinetry and stainless-steel appliances in the high-end kitchen

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Get serious about staying warm — and saving money

ALAN J. HEAVENS
McClatchy-Tribune

These climate-changing days, no one can truly predict what winter will be like. But preparing to meet the worst of what nature can throw at us is always a good idea.

The forecast looks good for energy prices this winter. Last year, we expected the worst, but relatively warm weather and industry's ability to deal with the supply disruptions after hurricane Katrina allowed many utilities to rescind increases in their natural-gas prices.

Still, you might want to exchange your furnace for a newer model.

Many of the new furnaces on the market are 25 per cent to 40 per cent more efficient than older models were. The Energy Star program promotes furnaces using a "condensing technology" as the most efficient.

The efficiency rating on the label of every new furnace tells how much of the total energy the furnace uses will be delivered to the home as heat. The higher the rating, the better.

But efficient heating doesn't stop with the furnace. Windows and doors can be big sources of heat loss, so don't skimp on the weather-stripping around them.

(If you have particularly leaky windows, you may want to use a plastic cover that shrinks onto the windows — it's less unsightly and damaging than stapling plastic to the frame.)

To decide where to install weather-stripping, try the candle test. Light a candle and move it around the window or door on a windy day. Note where the candle flickers, and that's where the weather-stripping goes.

Make sure your windows have no cracked or broken panes. To extract a broken pane, remove the putty and glazing points, then have a piece of glass cut to fit, replace the points, and reglaze.

Also check the rubber seals around the glass of storm doors and windows.

If they must be replaced, install weather-stripping rated for exterior use on doors and windows.

Most problems associated with winter result from the accumulation of ice and snow on roofs. If a snowfall is heavy enough and outside temperatures remain frigid for some time afterward, the snow will melt while the sun is shining, then freeze again after sunset.

That creates ice dams, which often lead to leaks that damage drywall or plaster ceilings and walls, necessitating costly repairs or replacement. If your roof has



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Start the winter off right by having an energy-efficient furnace installed.

a tendency to develop such dams, you might need professional advice on how to prevent them.

Inspect the chimney. The mortar in the joints between the bricks should not be loose or missing. When water gets into

joints with loose mortar, the action of freezing and thawing can turn the mortar to powder. Get fireboxes in wood-burning fireplaces cleaned and have the creosote removed.

Trim tree limbs that hang over the roof.

The weight of ice or heavy wind can cause limbs to damage the roof or power and phone lines.

Check your attic. Ventilation and insulation should act in concert to prevent heat loss while allowing melting and draining on the roof to go on unimpeded. This will prevent moisture buildup that causes rotting. You can tell whether remedial work is necessary by the condition of the wood sheathing. If it's rotting and the roof outside is sound, better ventilation is required.

Insulate the basement pipes — especially on the side that is in contact with cold walls. Even if you do have heat, pipes can freeze if the indoor temperature is not kept at at least 18 C, so insulating the pipes can cut down on energy use.

And finally, install a carbon monoxide detector. If your furnace malfunctions or gas appliances become faulty, carbon monoxide levels can build up and poisoning can result. A carbon monoxide detector can warn you before the so-called "silent killer" strikes.

■ Edmontonians eligible for rebates for buying Energy Star washers and dryers / J2