



Buyers competing hard for post-Olympic condos

Athletes village units at go on sale Thursday; buyers began lining up Saturday

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Vancouver Sun

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Condo fever has hit the Olympic athletes village near False Creek, with prospective buyers already lining up for sales that don't start until Thursday afternoon.

The athletes village becomes a market-priced housing project -- Millennium Water -- after the 2010 Games.

The lineup began around noon Saturday, meaning buyers or their representatives will have been in line for five days for the right to spend \$600,000 to \$3.4 million for one unit.

About 30 people were lined up Tuesday, with lawn chairs neatly arranged against the outside wall of the project presentation centre at 212 West First.

North Vancouver realtor Austin Gangur grabbed the number 11 spot in line on Saturday, as he works for a client anxious to buy a two-bedroom unit.

Wearing a yellow T-shirt and sporting a four-day growth of beard, he looked nothing like the clean-cut professional-looking realtor featured on his own website.

"I know I look like Brad Pitt in Fight Club right now but I don't care -- it's just part of the job," said Gangur, with Sutton Group West Coast Realty.

"It's a service you provide for clients and it makes you look good. Hopefully, it leads to repeat business."

He said lineup participants allow each other to leave for a while to eat or use washroom facilities but other than that, they have to remain on site the whole time or risk losing their place. Many sleep in their cars which have been parked nearby.

Chris Shin, who was near the front of the line, said he's being paid \$10 an hour by a realtor to keep a spot for a client.

"I've done this before but usually it's just for a few hours or maybe a day --

not five days," he said.

Rennie Marketing Systems director Bob Rennie said the lineup was not supposed to start until midnight today but buyers came early and refused to leave.

"They started forming a line so we just left them to it," he said.

"It's crazy but it's the Olympic Village, which is a legacy project."

The condo units range from about 500 to 2,500 square feet and 302 units go on sale Thursday, with another 400 expected to be sold in February.

Gangur said chaos would have resulted if project marketers had not allowed an early lineup.

"At least people know where they're at instead of everyone coming at the same time Thursday and screaming at the door that they were first," he said.

Gangur said his client wants to live in the project but also wants the option to sell his contract to another buyer for a higher price if real estate values continue to soar.

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