Enjoy the pride of home ownership without the burdens

JOEL CEUAUS
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

On the other hand, a down payment, mortgage installments, interest, renovation and maintenance costs, property taxes, school taxes and an asset vulnerable to factors outside your control. On the other hand, a rent payment.

Whether you’ve toiled for decades towards financial security or you’re beginning to work towards the future, wouldn’t it be better if your money worked for you?

Canadians increasingly understand the freedom that comes with financial security: freedom to invest, travel and experience everything life has to offer. For empty nesters unsure of their next move or young couples leery of swapping liquidity for bricks and mortar, there’s another way to live well without the burden of mortgages, taxes and repairs, says Olivier Monnais, property management director of Collection Équinoxe, which is completing a two-tower rental development on Marc Chagall Avenue in Côte-Saint-Luc, Que.

“Let savings grow and support your lifestyle, rather than committing your livelihood to paying for a house,” says Monnais. “You won’t leave anything behind but worry and expense.”

Co-developed by Jadco Corp. and Trantor Realty, Équinoxe appeals to those seeking upscale lifestyles without exhausting their capital or energy. A key player in greater Montreal’s high-end residential and rental markets, Jadco launched the concept in Laval two years ago, attracting retired folks, professionals and young couples aiming to maintain their standard of living while keeping their assets liquid.

Gone are property and school taxes, condominium fees, fears of market fluctuations over economic and political factors, and obstacles to mobility due to property commitments.

To compare the costs of maintaining a house, buying a condo or renting. Équinoxe collaborated with several financial institutions to create custom profiles and make the case to renters that while they will have to write a rent cheque, that money can be generated from interest on savings or capital from property sales.

“It’s hard to leave a house after spending so much time paying for it,” says marketing manager Mariève Anderson, “but Équinoxe living includes everything you’ll ever need and nothing you don’t, like taxes and repairs. You won’t miss anything, including your mortgage.”

The concept is taking root, as Montreal developers discover that a new type of tenant requires a new type of rental, with the comfort, amenities and quality of life they expect and deserve.

That’s how Équinoxe Marc Chagall distinguishes itself, offering 285 high-end apartments for incomparable life-styles and pride of ownership without the ownership. Units range from a cozy 700-square-foot one-bedroom model to living spaces as large as 1,800 square feet. The two- and three-bedroom units are in great demand “from those leaving a house who want a home office or guest bedroom to accommodate visitors, including grandkids,” says Anderson.

Spacious apartments with monochromatic themes allow everyone’s furniture to blend with the designer interiors. Contemporary quality finishes abound, from fully tiled bathrooms with separate showers and tubs to gourmet kitchens, as well as space for full-sized, stackable laundry machines. An appliance rental option offers high-end quality, less costly moves and peace of mind. Floor-to-ceiling windows, private balconies, air conditioning and a gorgeous entrance banish the notion of tired, drab apartment living.

With approximately 17,000 square feet of common space in two buildings, what’s included at the Équinoxe price point is extensive: a high-end fitness club and indoor saltwater pool, free Wi-Fi in common areas on the ground floor, Sabbath elevators and access to reception and catering rooms to welcome guests for all occasions. A private lounge with a billiards table, large-screen TV and a kids’ playroom top off a host of special elements that beautifully reinvent rental living.

Simply put, opting for a lease over a mortgage does not mean giving up curb appeal.

A concierge service will bring a host of amenities to your doorstep, offering a multitude of à la carte services, such as pick-up/drop-off dry cleaning, pet grooming (Équinoxe welcomes small pets), car wash and more.

An exciting social calendar is as close as an elevator ride, as Équinoxe hosts a full roster of dynamic activities, like fitness classes, holiday dinners, game nights, mah-jong tournaments and more in its completely smoke-free environment.

The location needs no introduction. Saunter a few hundred steps to city hall and the Eleanor London public library, where you can watch a play, join a book club, peruse new releases or take a class. Quartier Cavendish and its CLSC, food court, grocers, banks and movie theatre are just a half-kilometre stroll from your door.

With a dearth of quality rental options, the west end of the city welcomed the Équinoxe model, conceived by the builder who produced Laval’s luxury Quintesence highrises and the iconic Paton 1 on an exclusive island on Rivière des Prairies. “It’s exciting,” says co-founder Philippe Mourani. “Finally, an upscale rental development for an increasingly demanding clientele. We’re proud that Équinoxe will surpass their highest expectations.”

The project is drawing tenants from the West Island, Laval, neighbouring streets, towns and boroughs. There’s even a fair amount of inquiries from out-of-town-ers, says Monnais, as ex-Montrealers and snowbirds ponder spending more time with children and grandchildren without ownership obligations.

The first six stories of Phase 1 are ready for July occupancy, while the balance are scheduled for release in the fall. Phase 2 construction is slated to begin spring 2019.

Trantor managing partner Alexandre Bouchada says quality construction, finishing and amenities is a winning combination for discerning tenants. “With so many top-notch features,” he says, “Équinoxe Marc Chagall is the première address for property owners looking to downsize without compromise.”

Rents start at $1,150 for one-bedroom units and $3,470 for a sprawling penthouse, with two- and three-year leases available. All you pay for are utilities, and indoor parking is available at $95 per month (sign before May 15 and get one space free for a year.)

On July 1, just unpack and head for a leisurely swim – or go for the swim first, but then you may be too relaxed to unpack for a few days. Meander around the property, visit your sumptuous lounge or take the kids to the playroom.

It’s your home… Isn’t it about time?

Visit the leasing office at Quartier Cavendish, 5800 Cavendish Blvd., Côte-Saint-Luc, email marcchagall@collectionequinoxe.com, or call 514-700-9080. Consult the Équinoxe finance models at collectionequinoxe.com under the Rent or Buy section.
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Shop discerningly and be ruthless in decluttering your life

MARILYN LAZAR
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

It’s well and good to create the illusion of more space with decor techniques, but when it’s 7 p.m. and the dishes piled on the kitchen island make it impossible to do the paperwork you’ve brought home from the office, the hard limitations of reality bump up against the illusion of airiness.

In the raging battle with limited square footage, there are strategies, but no miracles. Embrace the beauty of minimalism. Sometimes limitations spawn great creativity. That is definitely the case with the best professionals. Consult one, if possible.

Interior designer Kate Zeidler is known for creating gracious, elegant and functional spaces that meet her clients’ needs. She shared her mandate on one such room designed for a young, single man.

“When designing the space, I had to do some design origami to fit all the pieces that were required into the condominium. We are often faced with these issues where clients come in with existing pieces of furniture, rugs and light fixtures, and need to find a way to make it fit and make it look esthetically pleasing. Sometimes we even have to figure out how to fold/hide furniture away so rooms can have double functions. For example ... (a) Murphy bed can be folded away to create an office/library space.”

Maintaining the serenity of small spaces requires surveillance. Develop a mantra that goes something like this: purge, declutter, organize, repeat. Be ruthless. Do you use that mixer? Do those jeans bring you joy? (Refer to Marie Kondo’s The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up. When you finish reading, give the book away.)

Be organized from top to bottom—literally. Keep stuff off the floor and find vertical space with wall-mounted shelves above furniture and doorways. Use harder-to-reach storage areas for less frequently required items, such as off-season garments. Grab scissors and tape easily from a hook on a pegboard. A knife magnet on your kitchen wall eliminates the need for a block on the counter or space in a drawer. Hang pots and pans from an overhead rack.

Organization stores have a sensual allure, promising to keep your life under control. Don’t fall prey to the terrific temptation of shopping for beautiful storage baskets before you do your homework. Monitor your space. If you notice one particular area that is most used and often messy, devise a system to keep it contained. Think inside the box!

Built-in structures are ideal but expensive and not portable. Create some of their benefits by putting small, inexpensive cabinets of drawers inside your closets, maximizing their functionality. Simple cubes work in a child’s closet. Install various sizes of cup hooks to maximize cupboards space.

Open shelving calls for attention to size, shape, colour and volume of what’s on display. When possible, cover clutter. If your office is in view, consider a secretary desk, where you can roll the lid down over piles of unpaid bills and the like.

Shop discerningly and environmentally, and carry a tape measure. Think twice before acquiring anything new. Make sure you don’t already own something similar. Focus on versatile pieces. A rolling cart can hold craft supplies in the playroom, get pulled out to serve as the bar at a party and be stored away when not needed. From beds to ottomans, many furniture items look great and have the bonus of storage capabilities. Utility and style need not be mutually exclusive.

Most of us don’t have the talent to plan a room with design origami like Kate Zeidler, so measure carefully to ensure a perfect fit before you buy.

Recognizing the potential in a fixer-upper

ELLEN LECHTER GREEN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Casey Benchimol, 28, and Ryan Pacht, 33, didn’t just move in together, they tackled a project. After years of separate apartment and condo living, the couple found a nearly century-old bungalow in a prime Toronto location and immediately recognized its potential.

“The house needed a complete overhaul,” says Benchimol, who was born in Montreal but grew up in Toronto. “But we figured it would be worth the effort once it was done.”

“Even though the place was a dump, I had this vision of what it could look like,” adds Pacht. “But the process was a challenge.”

Pacht quickly sold his condo, and with Benchimol’s lease expiring, the two decided to move into the new property during the renovations. Despite several months of living out of boxes and a few difficult weeks without running water, the couple remained determined to complete what at times seemed like an impossible goal.

“At the beginning, it was chaos,” admits Benchimol. “When we moved in, we had no floors, no kitchen and no functioning bathroom. We’d have to go to our parents’ houses to shower. We had to keep moving our stuff around from room to room as each one was renovated.”

Amidst all the mess, it was the little moments that kept the couple motivated. “When the closet was finally completed, I remember unpacking my clothes and organizing my shoes in the shoe rack,” says Benchimol. “It sounds crazy, but that small thing gave me hope that the end would eventually be coming.”

The couple did some of the work themselves, like removing subfloors and painting, but hired professional contractors for larger projects, like knocking down walls and installing kitchen cabinets.

“We were both used to living alone and having our own space, so we planned a house that would work for both of us,” says Pacht. “That meant two bathrooms, turning a small bedroom into extra closet space and creating an open concept by tearing down walls separating the kitchen, dining and family room. It was a balance between needs, esthetics and budget.”

To keep costs down, they updated the existing upstairs bathroom instead of fully renovating it. They replaced the old vanity, toilet and showerhead, but had the tub reglazed. “The entire bathroom looks brand new and completely different,” says Benchimol. “The charm of the original footprint is still there, but it’s now completely modern and reflects our style.”

That could be said for the rest of the house as well. In the end, every room was touched: they gutted the kitchen, reconfigured the basement and changed the flooring throughout. Together, they chose every detail, and acted as their own project managers, designers and decorators.

“The process was difficult, but it actually made us closer. We picked out what we liked and I can see our touch on every square foot of the house,” says Benchimol. “It was a huge undertaking, but we’re really happy with the result.”

The recently engaged couple are content to simply enjoy their house while they plan their wedding, at least for now. “What we’ll probably do, one day, is build our dream house on this land,” explains Pacht. “One day, we’ll knock it down completely and start over.”

“But we’ll lease another place to live during the construction,” adds Benchimol with a laugh.
Turning your design ideas into reality

ELLEN LECHTER GREEN
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Ceramique Royal has been providing clients with a large selection of porcelain, marble and mosaic floor and wall tiles for over 35 years. “We carry a complete choice of colours, textures and finishes, from the finest manufacturers in Italy, Spain, China and South America,” says co-owner Frank Lucia. “From tiny backsplash mosaics to tiles of every size for the floor and wall, you’ll find it all on site.”

The family-run business has thousands of product options, and their team of qualified staff is on hand to advise and assist you with your selection. “From the moment you walk through our doors, our team is available to answer your questions, help you with your selection and provide installation advice and installer referrals, if needed,” he explains. “We want you to be satisfied with your purchase, from beginning to end.”

Ceramique Royal offers a wide selection of high-end quality tiles and countertops at competitive prices. Countertop surface materials include a variety of options in granite, marble, Caesarstone, quartz and quartzite. “We also offer designer collections,” Lucia says. “For example, we carry a line of ceramic tiles from Italian designer Roberto Cavalli.”

Besides the many choices of countertops and tiles available, clients can choose from a selection of bathroom appliances and accessories that include bathtubs, Jacuzzis, towel warmers and shower seats, as well as lighting and shower fixtures. “We carry a wide range of products from some of the top brands in the industry,” he says. “We also have kitchen and bathroom cabinets, all Canadian-made, as well as sinks, faucets, showers, shower doors, vanities and more, from top-of-the-line manufacturers. We really are a one-stop shop.”

Their in-house designer can help you with design options and the installation team will complete the project from start to finish. “First, our designer will work with you to create a 3D rendition of your finished space so you know exactly what to expect,” says Lucia. “Then our installation team will turn your ideas into reality.”

By offering everything for a kitchen or bathroom project in one location, the store provides a stress-free experience for the homeowner. “When you come to Ceramique Royal, expect personalized service,” says Lucia. “You’re not treated like a customer, you’re treated like family.”

For more information, call 514-324-0002, visit royalceramic.com, or drop in to their showroom at 8845 Pascal-Gagnon in Montreal.
Westbury Montreal: a tranquil oasis in the city

Steps from the Namur metro station and 15 minutes to both the airport and the city centre, construction on Westbury Montreal is underway and, upon completion, will provide homeowners with an ideal urban location in a residential setting. Situated at the crossroads of Le Triangle and Mount Royal, the multi-phase development is not just a condominium project, it’s a community within a neighbourhood.

Real estate developer Devmont (who recently developed the highly successful and soldout Rouge Condo project) is creating a unique concept for homebuyers and merchants with this new 370,000-square-foot site. The Westbury site will include 550 residential condominiums, as well as a supermarket, pharmacy, boutiques, offices, several restaurants, an on-site Hilton hotel and a large central park. The prime location is close to schools, hospitals, city parks, services and more.

“Westbury Montreal is a luxury lifestyle project,” says Devmont president Sam Scalia, a real estate developer for 24 years. “What makes it unique is that it will be a fully integrated neighbourhood within an already established one.”

The first phase of the project is to be completed in 2019, with the entire development scheduled for completion in 2022. All homebuyers will have access to well-appointed common areas that include a gym, pool room, a “kitchen” area (complete with fireplace, tables and chairs), interior and exterior rooftop terraces on each building, a living room for socializing, sauna and an outdoor pool. Phases 1 and 2 are already selling quickly, while phases 3 and 4 will be launched in the upcoming months and promise to have breathtaking and unobstructed views of the mountain. But no matter which unit you choose, expect to receive the same attention to quality and design, as well as personal service. “Whether you’re in the market for a unit under 700 square feet or one that’s over 3,000 square feet, we can customize what you’re looking for,” explains Scalia. “Our goal is always customer satisfaction. Each client is equally important to us, no matter your needs or budget.”

All units will have high-end finishes and a variety of design options and floor configurations to choose from. “Besides our one-floor units,” he says, “we also have a few townhouse units available on two levels, with ground floor access directly to the outside.” Devmont offers many larger units in Westbury, which reflects their varied clientele. “You may be downsizing from a large home, but that doesn’t mean you need to compromise on luxury or square footage,” says Scalia. “Or perhaps you’re a family. Fifty per cent of our units have two and three bedrooms and are at least 1,000 square feet or more.”

As for the site layout, the condo buildings surround the park, which will have walking paths and a playground. A network of sidewalks and stone alleys will link the buildings, giving it a European flair. “We’re a self-contained community, but we’re also part of an existing one,” says Scalia. “Our vision is to create a functional, safe and beautiful neighbourhood, as well as enhance the surrounding one.”

For information on condominium units or office and commercial space, visit westburymontreal.com.
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