

In conversation with . . . Leonard Kerkhoff

By DAILY COURIER STAFF

One Water Street will dramatically change Kelowna's skyline, giving the city its two most statuesque buildings – the 36-storey East Tower and 29-storey West Tower in north downtown at Water and Ellis streets and Sunset Drive.

The developers — North American Development Group and Kerkhoff Construction — announced recently condominiums in the 29-storey West Tower will go on sale May 26.

At the same news conference, the developers donated \$29,435 to JoeAnna's House, the residence for the loved ones of out-of-town patients being treated at Kelowna General Hospital.

The dollar amount is based on \$1 per foot of pile used in the foundation of the East Tower, which is now under construction for 2021 completion.

The Daily Courier's Steve MacNaull caught up with Kerkhoff Construction vice-president Leonard Kerkhoff to discuss the project.

COURIER: You garner a lot of attention when you plan to build Kelowna's two tallest buildings. How did you decide on Kelowna and the 29-and-36-storey heights?

KERKHOFF: It's undeniable this community offers the most spectacular elevated views of Okanagan Lake never seen before in Kelowna. The City of Kelowna agrees it's time for Kelowna to take a higher density approach.

One Water Street is so well-located being downtown and on the lake, so clearly we had a chance to set the pace and show what could be done. In creating the project, we worked with the city, our architects and engineers on what's most appropriate for the neighbourhood and the kinds of homes people want.

The final design you see is the result, and it's clearly a bestseller in Kelowna.

COURIER: Give us the timelines and price ranges of condominiums for the two towers.

KERKHOFF: The East Tower now under construction is due to be complete in 2021 and is almost sold out. We're now looking ahead to the West Tower and will start sales May 26.

They'll start in the low \$300,000s, with half of all units under \$500,000. We've increased the size of the balconies in this tower and expanding the number of one-and-two-bedroom homes, including some with dens that were very popular in the East Tower.

The West Tower should be completed in 2022.



Special to the Daily Courier

Leonard Kerkhoff is part of the team developing three highrises in the Sunset Drive-Water Street-Ellis Street area of north downtown. He's pictured here with a model of the almost-complete 21-storey 1151 Sunset condominium. Kerkhoff Construction and North American Development Group are also developing One Water Street, a complex with two towers, which will be Kelowna's tallest at 36 and 29 storeys.

COURIER: Tell us about The Bench.

KERKHOFF: We're really excited about this. To us, this is what really makes One Water Street stand out. A three-storey podium for parking and commercial space will connect the two towers and will be topped with a 1.3-acre resort-inspired recreation area.

It will offer two swimming pools, lounge decks, an outdoor hot tub, outdoor grilling stations, fire pits, a pickleball court and a dog park.

There's also a large private health club with a fully-equipped gym, studios for yoga and Pilates, and a multi-purpose entertainment room.

All of these amenities are for the exclusive use of One Water Street homeowners.

COURIER: You aren't a stranger to building highrises in Kelowna. Tell us about 1151 Sunset and Executive House.

KERKHOFF: Both of the developers, North America Development Group and Kerkhoff Construction have long history of development in Canada.

Kerkhoff Construction built the first high-rise in Kelowna back in the early 1980s called Executive House and more recently is developing and constructing the 1151 Sunset tower immediately adjacent to One Water Street, slated for completion later this year. NADG is currently developing McKinley Beach, a master-planned community in Kelowna north.

Together, these developers are a powerful collaboration, bringing world class standards

into the design of One Water Street.

COURIER: A lot of highrises are being built and proposed for Kelowna. Is there room in the market for them all?

KERKHOFF: There's a crying need for housing of all kinds right now, especially the urban-style, well-appointed homes we're building at One Water Street.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's last report put our rental vacancy rate at 0.2 per cent, just about the lowest in Canada.

With economic growth comes professionals who need a place to live, and with the increase in the number of people wishing to retire in the Okanagan, just about half our sales to date have been to people from the Lower Mainland who know good value when they see it. The demand is strong.

Additionally, while many of the highrises are just proposed, the East Tower of One Water Street is under construction already.

COURIER: Why do you think people are embracing 'living in the sky'?

KERKHOFF: It's novel. It's something new in our area. We don't have many high-density buildings like this that have been modelled after successful buildings in other cities.

The views that come with living in a high-rise really takes advantage of the incredible beauty we have here in the Okanagan.

The lake views, the proximity to the lake, and being able to enjoy our landscapes are all really important parts of living in this development, along with the Okanagan lifestyle.

COURIER: You live in Vancouver, but spend a lot of time in here with these projects. What are some of your favourite things to do in Kelowna?

KERKHOFF: Dine downtown on a patio, jump on the lake for an afternoon of wakeboarding, hit a round at the golf courses, take home a bottle of wine for my wife and fresh cherries for the kids, ski with my construction team. Need I go on?

COURIER: Plans for more highrises in Kelowna?

KERKHOFF: We've certainly learned there is a demand for this caliber of homes, but right now we're concentrating on completing One Water Street which is a big success story to date.

No decisions one way or the other right now. When we took over 1151 Sunset prior to One Water Street we thought that might be the only building we would develop here, until we saw and assessed the opportunity and demand to build this community on the neighbouring land.