

NEW CONDOS

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NEW CONDO OF THE WEEK

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K7



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K5



Riding the rails

Project first to follow city guidelines for rapid transit

KATHY McCORMICK
CALGARY HERALD

A proposed multi-family project on the site of the Crowchild Inn could be the flagship for future developments linked to rapid transit, says Statesman Corp.

"We're trying to make the area a desirable place for people to congregate," says vice-president Brad Milne.

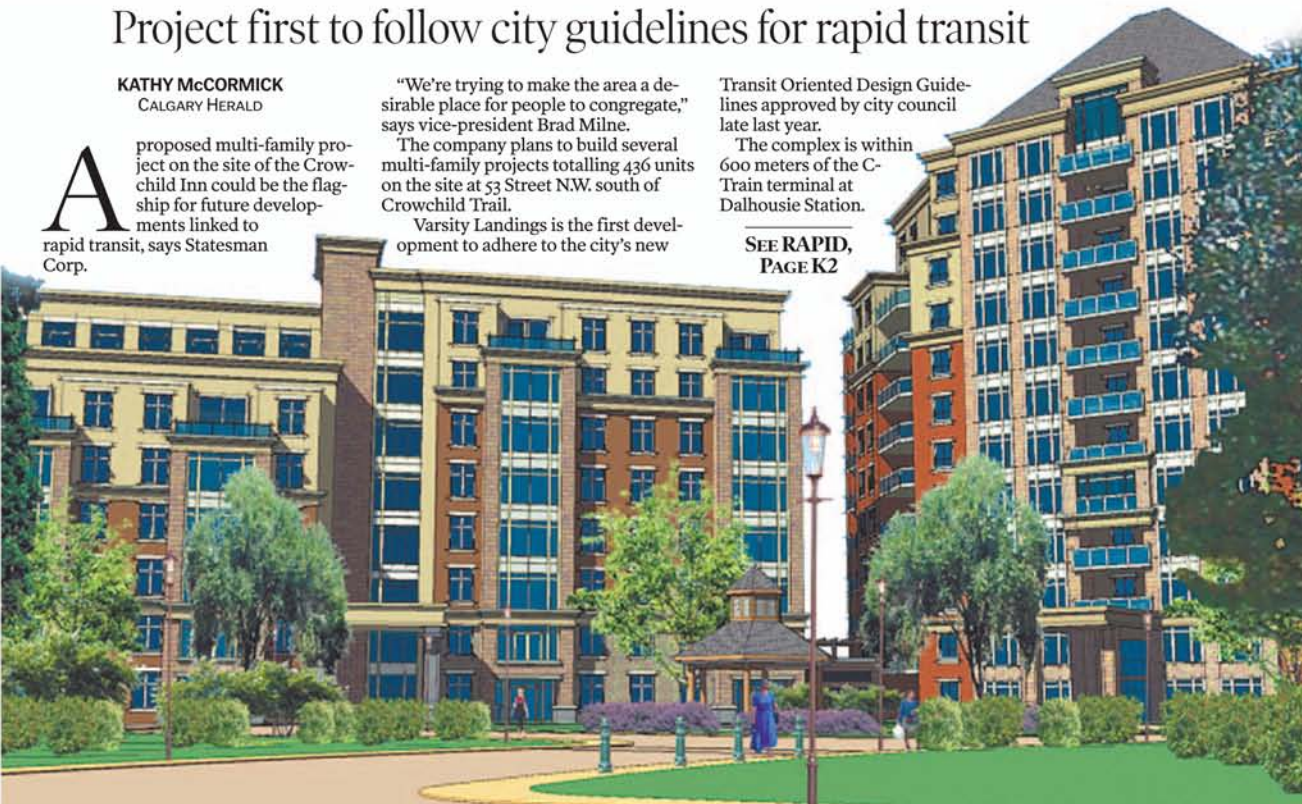
The company plans to build several multi-family projects totalling 436 units on the site at 53 Street N.W. south of Crowchild Trail.

Varsity Landings is the first development to adhere to the city's new

Transit Oriented Design Guidelines approved by city council late last year.

The complex is within 600 meters of the C-Train terminal at Dalhousie Station.

SEE RAPID,
PAGE K2



Courtesy, Statesman Group of Companies

An artist's rendering of the Varsity Landings condo development by the Statesman Group of Companies near the C-Train terminal at Dalhousie Station.

CONDO SHORTS

Southwest soaring

The southwest is the hottest quadrant in the city for resale condos, says the Calgary Real Estate Board. Of the 2,353 units sold through the board's MLS system from April to June, more than half were in the southwest — 1,238 — with the northwest a distant second at 695, followed by the southeast at 224 and the northeast at 196. The highest average price was also in the southwest at \$345,392.

— Marty Hope

Hey, good lookin'

Having a strong urban design policy is crucial to the well-being of any city, says a Vancouver expert. Although each city has examples of "deplorable" buildings — everything from condos to offices — that are "out there for all to see," Vancouver's policies help minimize such problems, says that city's co-director of planning, Larry Beasley. "After all, our economy is built on good looks, on being attractive," he told a recent conference in Calgary.

— Marty Hope

Vanilla not yet iced

Paul Battistella got a chuckle after hearing a possible name for his company's proposed follow-up to its Chocolate condo project. He was told that Battistella Developments should call it Vanilla — or Chocolate II. "We really haven't decided on any name yet," he says. The company earlier created Orange, a condo project in The Rivers (formerly East Village).

— Marty Hope

FROM KI
RAPID: Study to go before commission

As such, it fits in with the vision for creating high density around rapid rail transportation, says city planner Paul Donker.

A draft of the Varsity Land Use Study "will go to the Calgary Planning Commission July 28 and, if successful, will then be presented to council on Sept. 18," he says.

"This is quite exciting. We have in place the policy guidelines and now we've taken them and looked specifically at this site to plan how to accomplish transit-oriented development."

The key is to strike the right balance between transit-oriented density and "at the same time, ensure that we take into account how to minimize the impact on the surrounding community," says Donker.

Depending on timing and city council approvals, the hotel could be taken down in late winter or early spring, with pre-sales of the complex starting early next year.

The project will be phased, with a 12-storey tower likely the first building to be constructed, followed by the smaller buildings immediately east, with a seniors' building last.

"There is roughly a three-year build out from start to finish," says Milne.

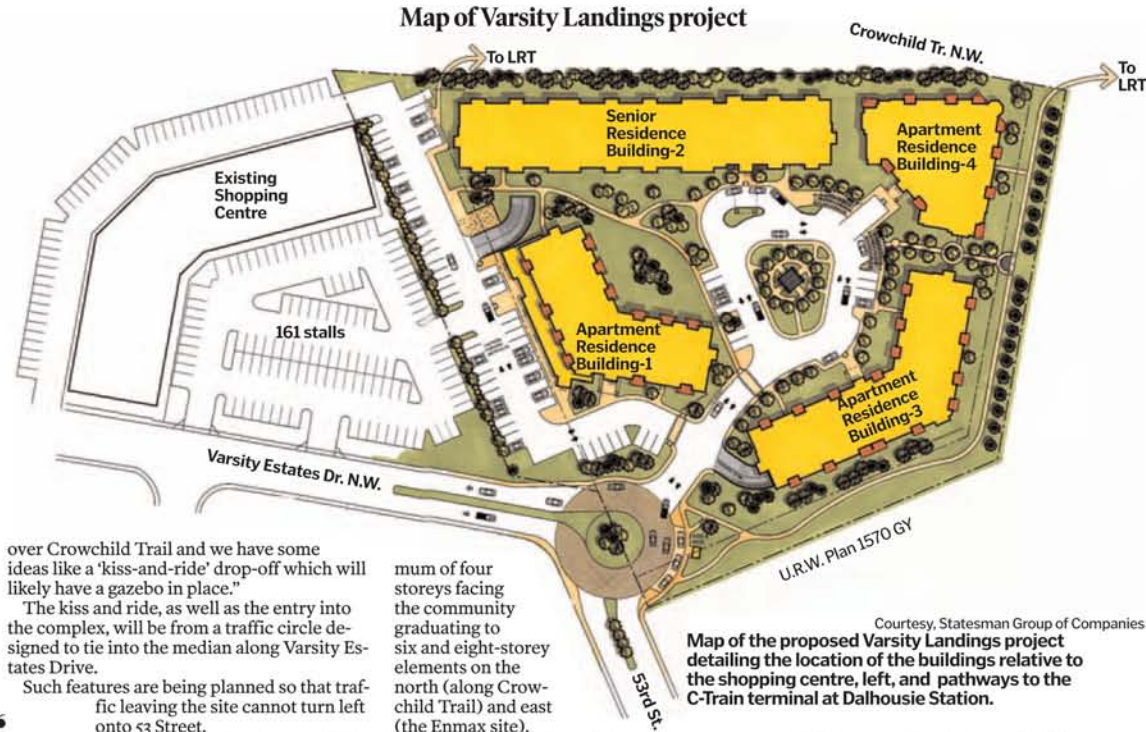
The hotel sits just west of Crowchild Square, a shopping complex that will remain on site.

"There's the Enmax substation, the shops in Crowchild Square, the Bow Valley Christian Church and some townhomes to the west under one ownership, all around the hotel site," says Donker.

"The challenge is that none of these sites are well connected to the community right now, and the Varsity Land Use Study will direct any future development in the study area. There's little landscaping, it's not connected to the community, and the parking lots are big and not friendly to pedestrians."

"The goal is to overcome the challenge of connecting the community to the site. Statesman has several areas where it can be accomplished, says Milne.

"We want the site to connect with the regional pathway system and the LRT — so we will do that with pathways along the site which are lit and landscaped," he says. "A pedestrian crossing will go



Courtesy, Statesman Group of Companies

Map of the proposed Varsity Landings project detailing the location of the buildings relative to the shopping centre, left, and pathways to the C-Train terminal at Dalhousie Station.

over Crowchild Trail and we have some ideas like a 'kiss-and-ride' drop-off which will likely have a gazebo in place."

The kiss and ride, as well as the entry into the complex, will be from a traffic circle designed to tie into the median along Varsity Estates Drive.

Such features are being planned so that traffic leaving the site cannot turn left onto 53 Street.

"We want the development to be pedestrian oriented, not only for homeowners, but for the residents of Varsity as well," says Milne. "It will enable residents of the community to have easy access to the LRT — and they'll be comfortable when they do."

Street-level homes along the side of the project facing Crowchild Square — consisting of live/work units — is another idea Milne is exploring. "That means there are 'eyes on the street' promoting safety," he says.

The whole site will be esthetically-pleasing, he says. "Over half of the site is landscaped and it will include a buffer of more than 230 mature conifers along the Enmax site — and architectural controls such as sandstone treatment at the perimeter level, with brick and acrylic stucco above," says Milne.

Rooflines will vary on the different structures and different projections and cornices, setbacks and building heights will give the whole a unique appeal, he says. "It is at an entrance into the community of Varsity and it could become the cornerstone of the community."

Buildings have been set back from Varsity Estates Drive and 53rd Street, with a maxi-

mum of four storeys facing the community graduating to six and eight-storey elements on the north (along Crowchild Trail) and east (the Enmax site).

A 12-storey high-rise will be in the northeast corner of the site.

"This has been designed to ensure that any shadowing effects on neighbouring residences is virtually non-existent," says Milne.

The mix of housing styles isn't the only unique part of the development.

Because the different buildings will be targeted to different buyers, the area should contain a variety of uses, says Donker. "The mix of uses spreads the impact of traffic."

One building slated for the area is Statesman's signature mature adult complex, the Manors. It will be six to eight storeys high and contain 148 units.

Two other apartment buildings will contain four storeys with 52 units, along with a structure of six to eight storeys and 124 units. "These will be similar but slightly smaller units and likely target a younger population," says Milne.

The fourth building will be a high-rise tower of 12 storeys and 112 units, he says.

"It's the first totally-concrete building we've done," says Milne. "It has a varied demographic of anywhere from 25 to 55 years, including empty nesters and young professionals looking for convenience and a place close to the LRT."

Many of the residents may only have one vehicle and underground parking is provided, with surface parking for 74 visitor vehicles.

Donker sees shared parking, car pools for offices on site, and flexible working hours helping to minimize the traffic impact.

"We're promoting the idea of traffic demand management," he says. "We'd also like to see some amenities that are useful for not just those in the development, but the community itself."

He envisions local commercial ventures such as small bookstores, coffee shops and the like that will be utilized by the community, the Varsity Landings residents, and even general transit users.

"We want to see people coming to shop or go out where there's somewhere to sit, a bit of green space and a link to the pedestrian walkways," says Donker.

Statesman has worked with the community residents for more than a year on proposals, listening to their concerns and trying to address them, says Milne.

"We think we have created a development that supports higher density — but it's been done in a very tasteful and elegant manner, with multi-dimensional structures with a high proportion of green space," he says.

The complex has already proven popular with area residents, says Statesman president Garth Mann. "There's a huge pent-up demand and we've had hundreds of calls to reserve already."

The over-50 population in Varsity is particularly looking for somewhere to move within the neighbourhood, he says.

"They're travelling more and yet have a strong feeling for this community," he says. "They want to stay."

At the same time, he says they are actively involved in the concept plans, ensuring that it be of high quality.

“We think we have created a development that supports higher density — but it’s been done in a very tasteful and elegant manner”

BRAD MILNE, STATESMAN GROUP OF COMPANIES



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

Brad Milne of the Statesman Group of Companies near the site of the Varsity Landings project.