



o matter how commonplace the home or condo, newspaper ads portray everything as “luxurious” or “sumptuous” or “extraordinary” or “masterfully crafted” or “spacious” or “drenched in ambiance” or whatever overwrought adjective gets lifted out of poor old Roget’s thesaurus. Like any little world in the age of specialty, the Lower Mainland real estate industry has its own jargon and code words. Don’t call it oxymoronic or weird, call it creative marketing. If the frantic hyperbole of some ads doesn’t get you, the sometimes byzantine reasoning will. Witness one recent full-page BLOW OUT PRICES! newspaper ad:

the development: a completed condo tower in New Westminster.

the lure: substantial price reductions on the remaining suites. But while this developer does boast that building homes is what it does best, its skill with marketing copy is questionable.

the lead-in: “A complete sell-out, so we’ve made drastic price reductions on the last 13 suites at —.” Next sentence: “Don’t blow this opportunity to save big on a great new home in Uptown New Westminster.”

Hmmm. Forget the fragmented syntax. Our query: how can it be a complete sell-out if there’s still stuff to be sold? The words “complete” and “sell-out” are absolutes. It’s either SRO or it’s not.

by their words, you shall know them

De-mystifying realtor-speak

By David Leidl

Can you be a little bit pregnant, or kind of dead, sort of? And what’s a “big”? The word is an adjective, not a noun. How can you save or accumulate one? Could you “eat enormous” or “drive large”?

While most realtors, developers, and architects are sensible, sensitive types we’re sure, when they’re on the job their jargon does get a bit muddy. For what it’s worth, here’s our attempt to de-mystify the lexicon:

distinctive home: It really doesn’t fit in with the rest of the street.

prestigious address: The pizza delivery guy will expect a big tip.

lots of updates: The fridge was leaking, the stove kept catching fire, so we replaced them.

don't wait on this one! *You can wait on this one.*
for a limited time only! *Psst... If you have money, we will talk. Anytime. Anywhere.*
special price/offer available to the next 10 buyers only! *Frankly, who's really counting?*

rezoning potential: Until the bulldozers arrive, isn't it reassuring to know you can always borrow a quarter-cup of 'baking powder' from the house next door... only you wouldn't want to... it won't be baking powder... and it won't be cheap.

a river/brook/ stream runs through it: We landscaped the culvert.

close to entertainment: There's an all-night biker sports bar just across the street.

adult-oriented: Congratulations. You're now an old fart.

secure/gated community living:
*To paraphrase Marlowe's Dr. Faustus—
 —are the bars of this golden cage meant to keep "them" out... or you in?*



excellent investment for the first-time buyer: 1) You wouldn't want to live here, but perhaps you can find a hapless tenant who will. 2) If you buy and are actually forced to live here, yes, someone certainly will make quick money off the deal...but it won't be you.

seismic upgrading: When the Big One hits, we think this old-timer should be okay. Maybe.

nature at your doorstep: A lost raccoon wandered in past the construction debris, chewed up the expensive imported new shrubbery and left... so we're going to capitalize on it.

limited collection/edition of homes: If the site was any bigger, we would have loaded on more building permits, but it wasn't, so we couldn't.

close to transit: *There's an all-night bus-loop just outside the bedroom window.*



artistic northern vista: Damn cold in the winter.

drenched in sunlight: Damn hot in the summer.

family-oriented: Congratulations, Homer and Marge. You've agreed to shake hands with early middle age, soggy nappies and the gathering twilight of your "glory days"...thank God. ■

Any suggestions or definitions worth sharing? Please send them in c/o BCBUSINESS magazine. However, rude suggestions regarding the writer's place in the universe or generalized abuse aren't welcome. He can dish it out, but he can't take it.



sunken living room: *Small carpeted hollow.*

unique walk-in closet: After the architect vanished, the framing crew discovered a strange lopsided vacuole on the plans but didn't tell us... so we ended up hiding it behind a mirrored door.

heritage: *Old.*

heritage-style: *Fake-old.*

contemporary design: *Will be quickly dated.*

ageless design: *Is already dated.*

classic design: *A new box-like building with a corrugated peaked roof and gables stuck on at both ends.*

own with five per cent down, or less, OAC: Yours today, foreclosure tomorrow.

euro kitchen: Has white melamine counters and a vegetable sprayer.

hot property

exciting high-ceiling design: Where the architect seemed lavish with the vertical (walls), he scrimped on the horizontal (floor space). If you're vertically-challenged, expect to be intimidated.

in the trendy part of town: Yet another Starbucks has landed.

great potential/needs some TLC: If you're single, you will have no social life. If you're married, you soon won't be.

state-of-the-art/high-tech kitchen: Has brushed steel counters and a vegetable sprayer.

classic country-style kitchen: Has no vegetable sprayer.

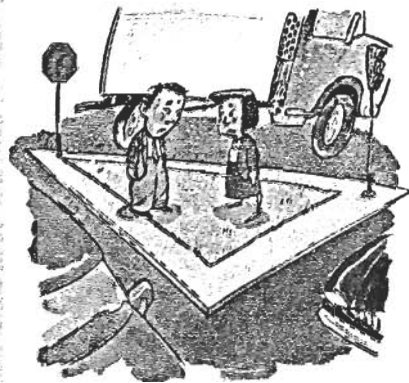
enclosed den: Windowless cell too small to call a bedroom, too big to call a closet.

contractor-built: Heaved together by a seemingly itinerant local guy named Gord who has a pickup truck and who pumps out houses like a sausage-machine but then, as a marketing ploy, creatively sticks his own 'designer' label on each generic squeeze of slap-dash wallboard and sawdust filler. You'll love it.

investor alert! Here, fishy, fishy. A truly interesting property: Normal people have been avoiding it; perhaps you're different?

vendor will take back mortgage: Attention undesirables! This place has problems, regular lenders won't touch it and/or the vendor is crazy.

full-size: *Standard.*
large/generous: *Adequate.*
huge/enormous: *Slightly bigger than large/generous.*
cozy/cute/intimate/friendly: *Tiny.*
piéd à terre: *Pretentious realtor French for très petite.*



adapt it to your own unique taste: Builder saved heaps of dough everywhere. *Aka* shake hands with The Home Depot.

was the original display suite: The marketing budget/sales pooped out just before we could flog this one.

architect-speak 101

sense of place/connection/etc.: *Signifies nothing but impresses credulous clients.*

concept/metaphorical/totemic/etc.: *Signifies nothing but impresses sycophantic underlings, open-mouthed university students and/or editors of glossy lifestyle magazines.*

paradigm: *Impressive noun used by with-it architects to describe the latest on-the-edge concept prior to it being tagged with a label and thus quickly becoming (yawn) yesterday's contemptuous has-been fad philosophy (i.e. post-Modernism).*

spatial massing: *A nonsense architectural contradiction – massing describes the 'lumps of building' and spatial describes the spaces between them. Handy for making sly fun of dullard clients without them realizing it.*

symbol: *Term used by realtors and marketers to describe architecture they don't really understand but feel they should.*

professionally-designed floor plans: Well, duh. What do you think, we had cousin Ned the ninny scrawl it out on the back of an A&W napkin?

master bedroom: But if this is a one-bedroom unit...where's the "subservient" bedroom?

prices like this won't last!: Yes they will.

product: Jargon noun used by insecure developers, real-estate journalists/PR types and realtors to describe the wares and to reassure themselves they're actually hard-nosed, tough business guys and gals and not glorified pin-pounders, semi-literate hacks'n' flacks and/or relentlessly effusive sales clerks with cell phones.

one and one-half bathroom:

One standard bathroom for you, one cramped cubicle with sink and toilet for your delighted guests

special preview: Congratulations!! Our president (...okay, the marketing guy) extends to carefully selected you!! a "most special personal invitation" to view our fabulous luxurious offering before the official opening! Think of the first-dib possibilities! Revel in the implied snobbery! VIP you!! gets first look and will avoid the usual mob-scene of sweaty proles and common rabble! (But guess what? Come the big morning, unique you!! will be jostling on the sidewalk with the thousand other peevish "select" first-call, mass-mailout tire-kickers. You patsy, you.)

priced below assessed value:

The market is dropping like a dead albatross and we really need to hang this one around someone else's trusting neck. Fast.



breathtaking view: *In the smoggy distance, you can dimly see a mountain.*

spectacular view: *Sure, until that huge rival condo tower squats itself down in front of you.*

peek-a-hoo view: *Bring a stepladder and expect to squint.*

made for urban living: Expect to eat out a lot.

within easy walking distance to: A French Foreign Legionnaire with good boots would laugh at the distance involved.