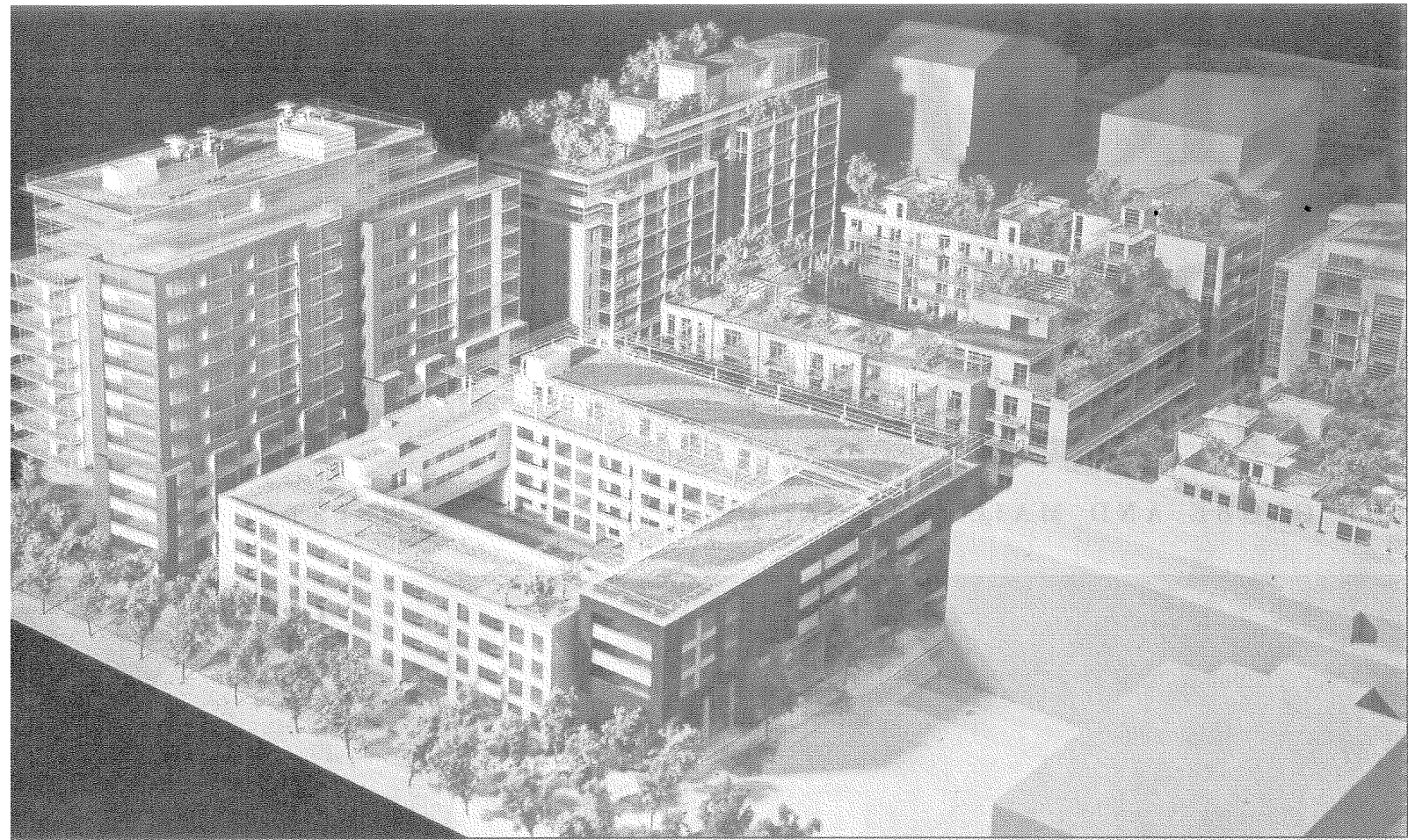




COMBEROFF BELL LYON ARCHITECTS GROUP INC.

Model of the South East False Creek athlete's village shows the social housing component in the low wing surrounding the courtyard.

murky vision for Millennium Water

Continued from the previous page.

Mr. Lyon and his colleagues have designed a 13-storey, unit 'market' condo building on Columbia Street, with a low-rise, wave-shaped 84-unit social housing complex around a courtyard along the block's eastern edge on Manitoba.

According to Mr. Lyon, the unit curtain wall on the west side of the market building from developer Shahram's interest in a wave-shaped design on a Norman Foster mid-rise housing project in London. For four through 11, a banding of eight glass railings run the length of the building's length along Columbia, curved wall and balconies set them like cardboard corrugations. The first three storeys are cluttered by balconies, glass siding sidewalk in a sinuous way down the block. Lacking the conviction of its

own organic forms, the building is topped by something quite different — a half dozen penthouses arrayed like squared-off country club mansions. These, plus the idea of putting the highest towers on the western portion of the block came from all-powerful marketing consultant Bob Rennie's "Big View, Big Price" philosophy, says Mr. Lyon. Views to the west are prized most of all, even though this means the family-oriented social housing courtyard next door will remain in shadow when most used — late afternoons and early evenings.

Everyone had to give a bit to make this project happen. According to Mr. Lyon, for Millennium it was their obligation to use double-loaded housing corridors (they seldom build these elsewhere) for the mid-rise, though each end is open to natural light and breezes, in good sustainable fashion.

The architecture of plans and elevations is very different for the

Everyone had to give a bit to make this project happen.

eastern and western sides of this corridor. The eastern half of the building is un-curved, just a few of the units closest to 1st Avenue rotated out of alignment a few degrees, allowing sliver views to the North Shore mountains, and preventing these from becoming hard-to-sell 'dog units' at the least desirable corner. To be sure, the design reconciliation of four quite-different elevations is a tough architectural problem, but GBL has not come close to solving it here.

Working within strict B.C. Housing guidelines, the social housing block adjacent is more even-handed, and in its mandated simplicity, more architecturally successful.

Larger family apartments are ringed around the courtyard, with smaller suites in the block along Manitoba, this wing clad in a red brick. This cladding, plus the fritted glass panels planned for the rest of the structure are of a higher standard than typical for Vancouver social housing — compliments to developer and architect for doing this. The only slip here is a curving lobby, a hiccup passed on from its confused neighbour.

Dull condo towers downtown and now the over-prescribed mid-rises of South East False Creek are demonstrations of how Vancouver is failing to spark artful city-building and innovative architecture. The reason for this — at design panel, at city council, in the offices of planners, developers and designers — is because a culture of mere sufficiency has prevailed over a culture of true excellence.

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Globe Real Estate

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III ARCHITECTURE

A design marathon disappoints at the starting gate



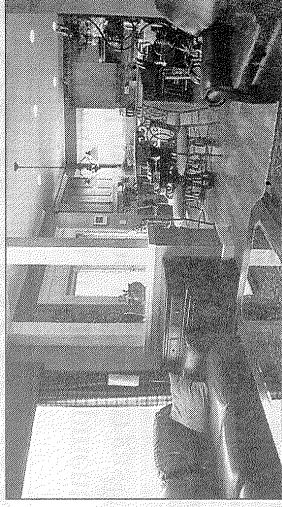
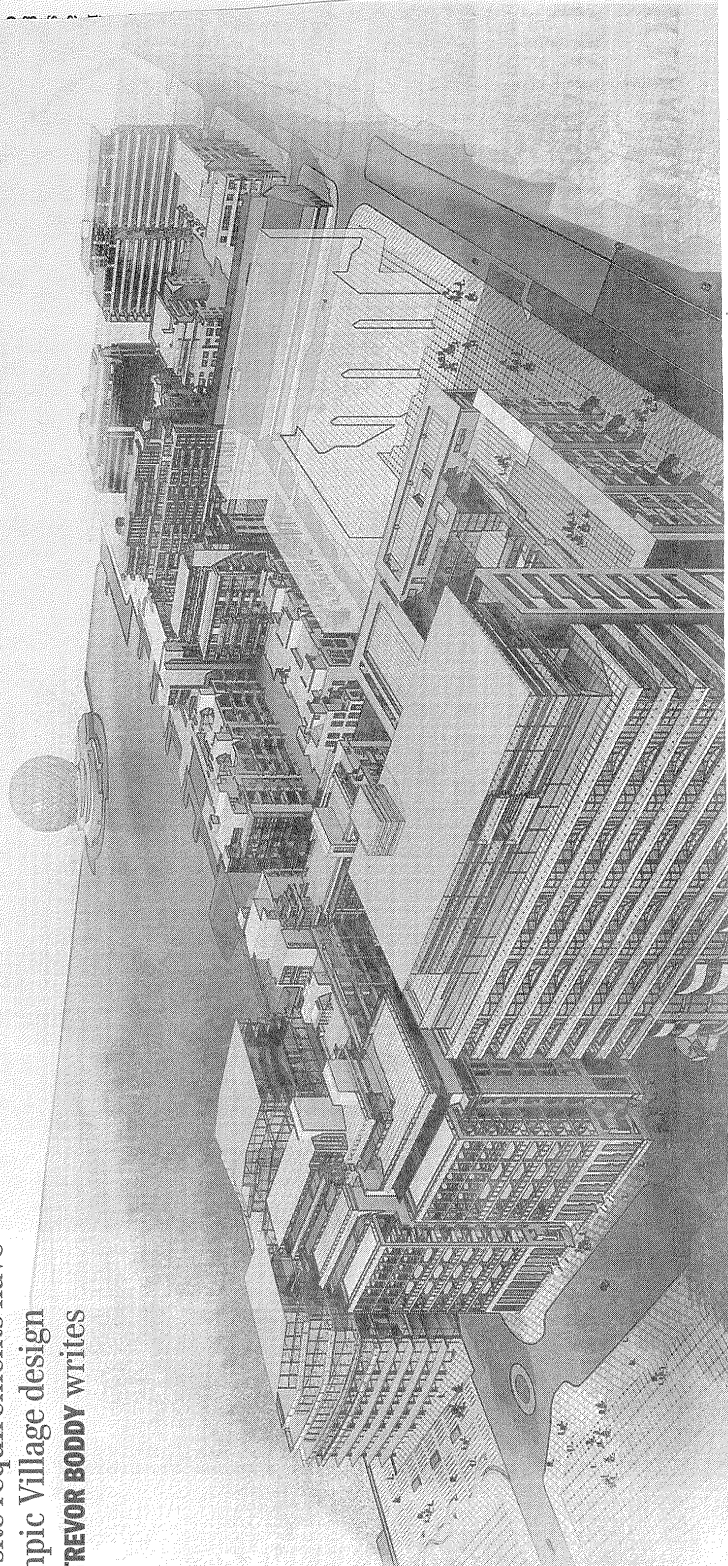
Stringent site requirements have
bled Olympic Village design
of verve, **TREVOR BODDY** writes

After years of waiting, we at last have an idea of the architecture coming for South East False Creek, portions of which will start out as the athlete's village for the 2010 Olympics. The design news is not good.

The downtown Vancouver formula of skinny condo towers on top of rows of townhouses has been jettisoned for this, the city's last large development zone on the waterfront. Instead, no building will be higher than 13 storeys. Because SEFC densities will be higher than most of downtown, this means that more housing will have to be packed closer to the ground.

This is due to planning requirements, but also in large part because winning developer Millennium Development paid a record \$200 per square foot for the huge site. This netted the City of Vancouver a windfall profit of \$60-million more than anticipated in the \$193-million sale of the SEFC properties it had assembled.

Architects for the first buildings to start construction soon are re-



Gone in 48 hours

DONE DEALS, \$5

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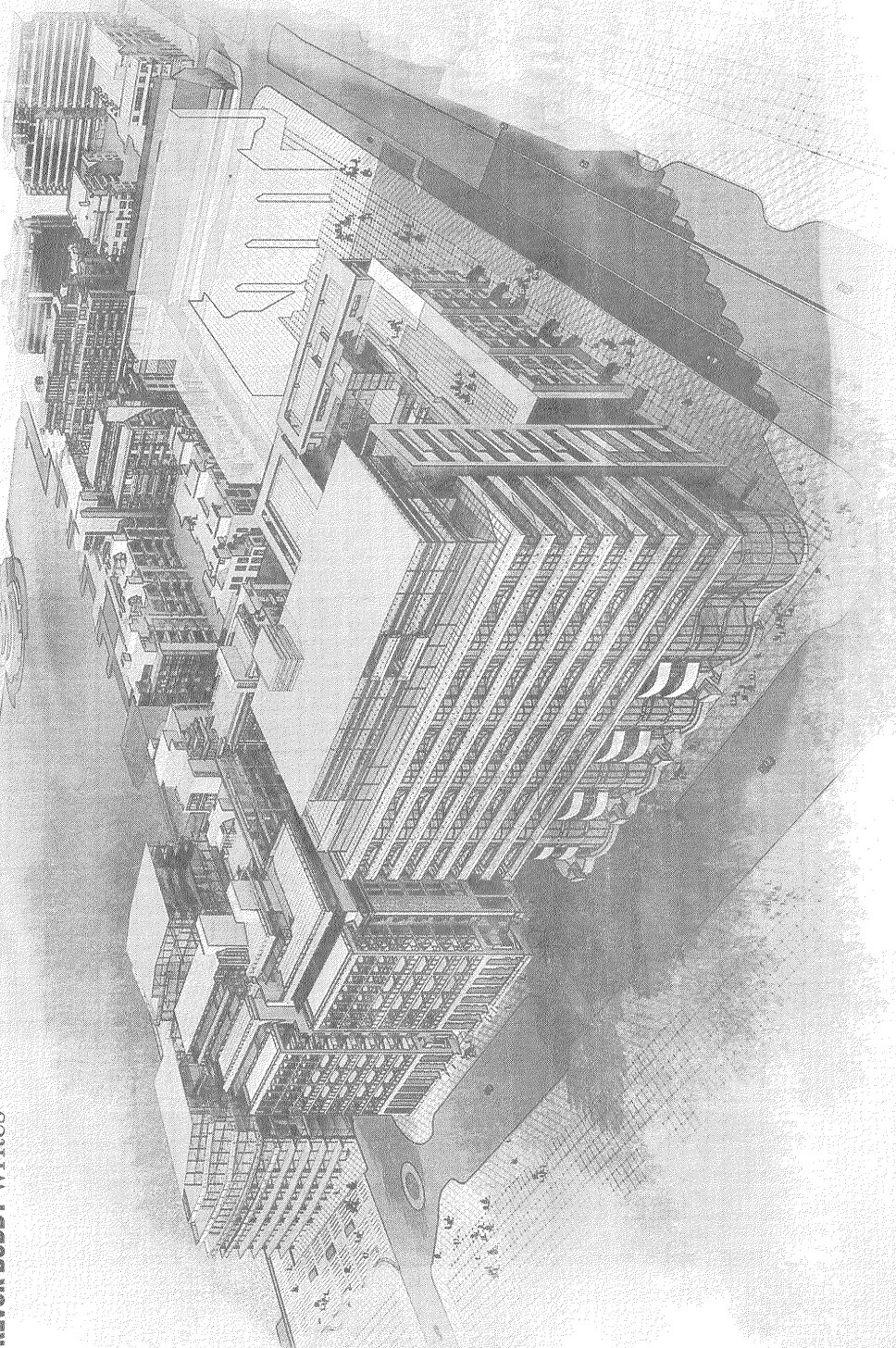
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Architects for the first buildings to start construction soon are expected Vancouver housing specialists Gomberoff Bell Lyon. At the January 9 meeting of Vancouver's design panel — which somewhat grudgingly approved the design plan after several previous rejections — one member nailed the character of the designs for the first of these new blocks by describing them as having a "pseudo-retro European look."

To me, the since-refined designs — published here for the first time — recall nothing so much as flashier versions of 1990s re-building around the edges and in the ruined centres of former East German cities. These new housing zones are earnest in intention, Green in aspiration, competent in execution, but so utterly un-memorable as to induce that heavy-heartedness Germans call *weltschmerz*.

The architects, developer, planners and politicians have laboured hard and brought forth a mediocrity — Wetmar gone west-coast; Desai with Douglas fir; Falkensee on False Creek. How did this happen, on a precious precinct of our city which will be the focus of intense global curiosity in 2010?

I found a partial answer at that same January 9th design panel meeting — an advisory, not regulatory body charged with improving the quality of our architecture and



The Columbia St. 'market' condo has an undulating curtain wall. The first three storeys are unencumbered by balconies, glass meeting sidewalk.



There was a lot of pain at design panel.

STU LYONS, ARCHITECT
GOMBEROFF BELL LYON

responsible for key elements of the urban design.

The feeling in the room that winter's day was the closest I have ever experienced to an architectural version of the Stockholm syndrome — where stress causes captives to start admiring and emulating their captors.

Plans for the key site had been presented many times previously, and design panel members seemed worn down by repeated revisions of the housing plans, in frustration asking for a list of design principles for designs that seemed to lack them.

More generally, and in fairness to developer and designer, there was a sense that SEFC's elaborately predetermined urban planning, housing mix and building density requirements — all admirable intentions — had, in their aggregation, conspired to take away any possibility of architectural verve or flair.

What happened to his team's plans for the Olympic village and the permanent neighbourhood to follow is succinctly summed up by Mr. Lyon: "There was a lot of pain at design panel."

Despite faint praise and muted criticisms, ("The elevations

lack interest," "Too many elements,") the panel approved the design. Panel member and architect Peter Wreglesworth called the taller buildings' design "much improved."

The site has been split into blocks designed by Gomberoff Bell Lyon or Merrick Architecture.

GBL is responsible for a block called Parcel 2 at the southwest corner of the site along 1st Avenue between Manitoba and Columbia, where site preparations are already under way.

Continued on the next page.

GOMBEROFF BELL LYON ARCHITECTS GROUP INC.