

Great Outlooks Draw Lower Mainlanders to Kelowna

**COMMUNITY SPIRIT,
PROXIMITY TO NATURE
AND BIG-CITY OFFERINGS
AMONG THE DRAWS OF
KELOWNA DEVELOPMENT**

CHRIS FREIMOND

Laurel Stein and Dwight Willett considered their options carefully when they first started thinking five years ago about moving from their townhouse in West Vancouver. They were looking for a new kind of lifestyle — more relaxed, closer to nature and less rushed than the Lower Mainland. They looked at the Sunshine Coast and Bowen Island, but in the end, they settled on Kelowna.

Stein has a simple explanation for their decision: “Because it’s really nice,” she says.

Following a vacation in Kelowna in 2014, when they rented a house in the Wilden neighbourhood, a picturesque hillside community north of downtown Kelowna, the couple decided to buy a lot in the new subdivision and build their dream home.

“When we were in the Wilden vacation home for those three weeks, everything just felt really good,” says Stein. “One day we drove up to the Wilden presentation centre and looked at the show homes and put our name down for a lot.”

Willett says they had considered Kelowna once before, but this time it was different. They broke ground on their new 3,500-square-foot home in July last year and moved in on May 28.

“We were looking for the right feel, and we knew this was it,” he adds. “We wanted a place exactly like we now have.”

Being close to nature is important to Stein.

Spread over 2,000 acres, Wilden encompasses natural ponds, panoramic ridges and a wide network of trails.

“We can walk out of our front door and be in nature in about 30 seconds,” she says. “Wilden has been developed so that there are pockets of nature interspersed among the homes.”

The couple were also pleasantly surprised by Kelowna’s cultural and entertainment offerings.

“Eating out, for example, is easy,” says Stein. “Everything is so close by.”

For Willett, who works on contract for a federal government agency and



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needs to travel for work, proximity to the airport is important, and he’s now only 20 minutes away.

Karin Eger-Blenk, director of Blenk Development Corp., the family-owned company developing Wilden, says she hears similar comments from new residents every day.

“I don’t think there are many places in the world where you can live in such a beautiful setting and still so close to a vibrant city,” she says. “Time is our most precious asset. Living in Wilden, you simply have more of it, because you never have long commutes.”

With a population of approximately 123,000, Kelowna is the largest city in the Okanagan Valley. The airport is the third busiest in B.C. and the economy is varied and diverse with a strong focus on tourism, the wine industry, regional agriculture and services.

The recent opening of the

\$35-million, 104,000-square-foot Okanagan Centre for Innovation in downtown Kelowna was hailed as a symbol of the city’s transformation into a top technology and economic hub.

Kelowna’s economic outlook was one of the factors that attracted Cameron Dodd to the city. He recently started a new job as development and planning manager with Blenk Development Corp.

He has purchased a townhouse under construction in the neighbourhood and will move in with his wife and five-month-old son later this summer. He is currently commuting from his home in Port Moody, but looking forward to settling in Kelowna.

“There are several reasons why we decided to make the move, but lifestyle is the main one,” he says. “We were really attracted by outdoor recreation activities the

Following a vacation in Kelowna in 2014, Laurel Stein and Dwight Willett decided to buy a lot in a new subdivision located in Wilden and build their dream home.

area provides; proximity to nature and local amenities like ski resorts, wineries, the lake and hiking. And, of course, the Okanagan is known for its good weather.”

Housing affordability was a big factor in the Dodds’ decision. They were in a condo in Port Moody, but with a growing family, they knew they would need to start considering a bigger new home.

Their new townhouse is twice the square footage of their Port Moody condo and cost less than what they sold the condo for, and there is still the option to either build or buy a detached home down the road, he adds.

None of this comes as a surprise to Tom Dyas, president of the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce.

“We are hearing more and more about new residents who have moved to Kelowna to pursue their careers and maintain a lifestyle that fits their expectations – and their budgets,” he says. “These stories are being covered in our local media, good news stories that talk about the multiple pluses of living in the Okanagan: friendly community, good housing prices, good jobs, beautiful, year-round outdoor lifestyle.”

This story was created by Content Works, Postmedia’s commercial content division, on behalf of wilden.ca

TOP 10 REASONS WHY FAMILIES EMBRACE THE KELOWNA LIFESTYLE

1. Nature on their doorstep
2. 2,000 hours of sunshine annually
3. World-renowned wineries, golf courses and ski resorts
4. Some of the best hiking trails in Canada
5. A vibrant cultural scene
6. 132 kilometres of sparkling Lake Okanagan
7. A diversified economy offering great job opportunities
8. Real estate prices that are 50 per cent below Metro Vancouver’s average
9. Easy connectivity to the rest of Canada through B.C.’s third busiest airport
10. Great schools, colleges and universities, including a UBC campus

TOP 10 JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN KELOWNA

1. Registered nurses and psychiatric nurses
2. Health care managers
3. Construction managers
4. Social, community and correctional services managers
5. Medical laboratory and radiation technicians
6. Dentists
7. Specialist physicians
8. General practitioners and family doctors
9. Ambulance attendants and paramedics
10. Dental assistants

Based on the percent of the 2020 workforce that will be new hires.

Source: Growing in the Okanagan 2020 Labour Market Outlook published by the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission