## 'Shangri-La' is faster, higher, stronger

Vibrant Vancouver is a city of accolades preparing to become the focus of international attention, finds Lucy Hyslop

IF EVER a city were to embody tallest - building to be stirring ter Games for 2010.

As 'wow' factors go, a needs no embellishment. Flycaressed by Christmas-treecoated peaks; an ocean generously sprinkled with yachts

Glass towers dominate the skyline, floatplanes and cruisbour and Stanley Park - some four kilometres square in size - is a vivid reminder that the temperate rainforest.

No surprises that the province's numberplates carry the slogan 'Spectacular by Nature', or that Vancouver is already a city of accolades: from regularly ranking as the top city in the world for quality of life to this year's "best city in the ers of Traveler magazine.

erland, editor of Western Livtrends magazine.

"The climate is similar to western France or the south of

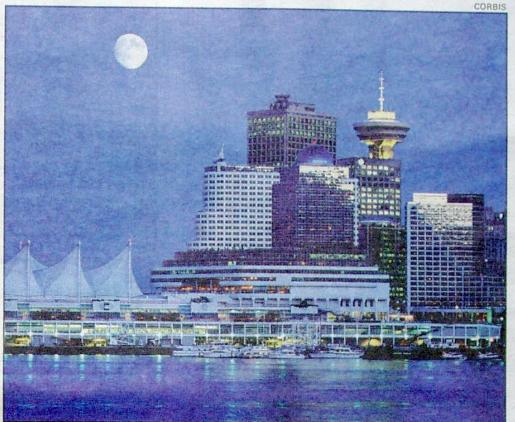
the motto of the Olympics, then the masses goes by the same Vancouver would be it. Citius, name. As one of the fastest Altius, Fortius (faster, higher, growing cities (statisticians put stronger) perfectly echoes the the city's population as rising spirit of the young Canadian by 80 per cent between 1999 city, recently awarded the Win- and 2040), real estate is almost like a game in Vancouver.

Sixty-storeys (640ft) high on description of Vancouver the border between the downtown and more residential ing in from London, you finally West End area of the city, reach the end of the exhaustive Shangri-la is riding the post-Coast Mountain range and wit- modern trend for "live-work" ness a cosmopolitan oasis suites with an emphasis on cutting out the commute. The development also features a supermarket, restaurant, and islands; and a Mt Fuji-like 4,200sq ft spa/fitness centre volcano (Mount Baker) on the and even a public art space managed by the neighbouring Vancouver Art Gallery.

According to one of the city's ers add romance to the har- major condo marketers. Bob Rennie, sales are going swimmingly. "In six weeks, all 223 condos on levels 16-42 were city was carved out of a coastal sold," he states. "This is unprecedented activity in the luxury market."

"Vancouver may go down as the place where the North American high-rise was unexpectedly perfected," Sutherland points out. "With few major companies' head offices on its downtown peninsula, the Americas", thanks to the read- city has re-zoned most of the land to be residential, leading "In the frozen Canadian to the construction of huncontext, the city seems almost dreds of narrow, glass-clad, unbelievable," says Jim Suth- view-seeking condominiums. At street level the ambience is ing, Vancouver and Western almost European, while 30 Canada's monthly home- storeys up the Wallpaper magazine ideal is finally being lived."

All this, and Shangri-La isn't



Shining example: part of the skyline of Vancouver which has been dubbed 'best city in the Americas'

"The past three years have Tourism Vancouver offices, seen consecutive double-digit percentage increases in sale prices, especially for high-rise condos," Sutherland explains. "A lot of the action came from Americans who were attracted by the low Canadian dollar and the safe-resort atmosphere."

It's even spawned an industry of "assigning" your condo new commercial and residen-

there's talk of it bringing "energy and optimism" to the city. "There are several capital projects under way or in the planning stages including expansion to the convention centre, a new transit system from the airport into downtown Vancouver, and many on to another buyer before it is tial projects in the downtown

ticipate in changes that make Vancouver even more liveable and welcoming to the world."

He adds: "We know that our city and province will become a focal point after the winter games in Turino as we continue our Olympic preparations. Having the world's attention on Vancouver particularly from 2008-2010, will be a tremendous opportunity to tell our story via international media."

Long dismissed by the more urban, financial Canada of the east as "Lotusland" - a haven for hippies and alternative lifestyle-seekers - Vancouver appears to be coming into its own. Sure, the city is full of fitlooking people who are seeking a healthier lifestyle. But there's also a strong urban and work culture.

As Rennie says: "We are undervalued for Canada for the level of quality that is standard in our market and we are undervalued in relation to the low-profit margins that Vancouver developers accept."

□ Lucy Hyslop is the former chief features editor of the Vancouver Sun

