

Simon Fraser University: Creating spaces that make the most of living on campus



Photography: Barrie Underhill

Established in 1965, Simon Fraser University (SFU) is consistently ranked alongside the top research universities in Canada and in the top 250 universities in the world. The newly built East West Undergraduate Residence Towers welcome new students into a community where a sense of comfort, belonging and place is valued.

A Welcoming Space for New Students

The newly built East West Undergraduate Residence Towers at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia represent a new standard for on campus living and care. The development team started from the understanding

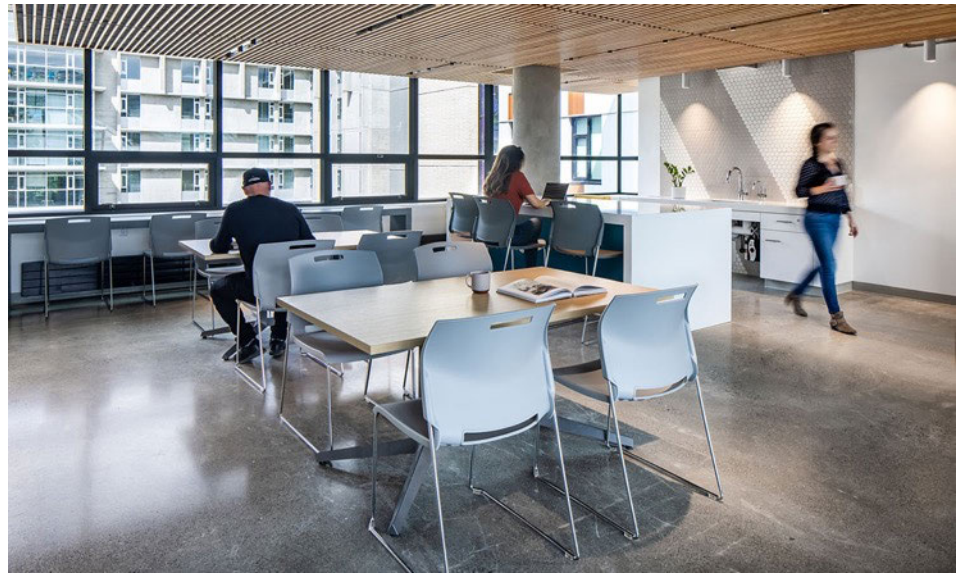
that first year university can be an overwhelming. Erica Wickes, Principal 34F Design, explains, “Anxiety levels are high. A lot of the students are international, coming from far away. Likely away from home for the first time, they find themselves out of their comfort zone emotionally and culturally, so how do you create that tangible feeling for the students that this space is just for them, represents them, is part of their identity, not just a place to go to sleep?”

Providing Choice and Opportunities to Connect

Both towers, seven and eight stories respectively, are designed with the student’s wellbeing in mind. Departing from an institutional approach of stacking monolithic rows of resident rooms on top of each other, these buildings are designed to bring in, light, choice, and vibrancy to the space. Each floor features its own house lounge and every second floor a small kitchenette,

“The trend is to create residences that are open concept, more fluid, where spaces easily flow from one to the other.”

Elizabeth Servage, Associate
34F Design



to encourage residents from different floors to interact. Full height windows everywhere bring nature and light in. Further, an open, airy hub space on the ground floor visible from the floors above, serves as a grand welcoming gesture that connects the building both vertically and horizontally. This lower area incorporates a variety of adjacent spaces that perform multiple functions. “The trend is to create residences that are open concept, more fluid, where spaces easily flow from one to the other,” explains Elizabeth Servage, Associate, 34F Design.

Nurturing an Active and Lively Community

Private niches designed to allow students quiet time and respite outside of their rooms bleed into larger common areas that support more social activities, while other collaborative spaces of varying sizes support group work and study. The choice of furniture in each zone is crucial to that space’s success. Says Erica, “we needed modular seating and tables that would support the vibrancy of the building itself. It had to be flexible and moveable so it could adapt along with the activities of the students and their learning styles. It should also be comfortable and welcoming, while durable enough to hold up to vigorous use”. For the designers, Global furniture was the natural choice. Erica explains, the furniture “adds to the landscape of the residences. It sets the mood, carves out the zones, and sets the stage for the activities that will take place in each area.”

On what makes this project a success, Erica concludes, “Think of a home, where you easily flow from bedroom to living room to kitchen to family room. We created



that same feeling, that same comforting sense of home that is so integral to student wellbeing, because the best thing is to set it up like mum and dad’s living room – just a little nicer.”

DESIGN

34F Design

ARCHITECT

Dialogue Architecture, Vancouver

FEATURED PRODUCTS

River Lounge Seating, Popcorn Seating,
Terrina Tables, Swap Tables



