



# CONDOS

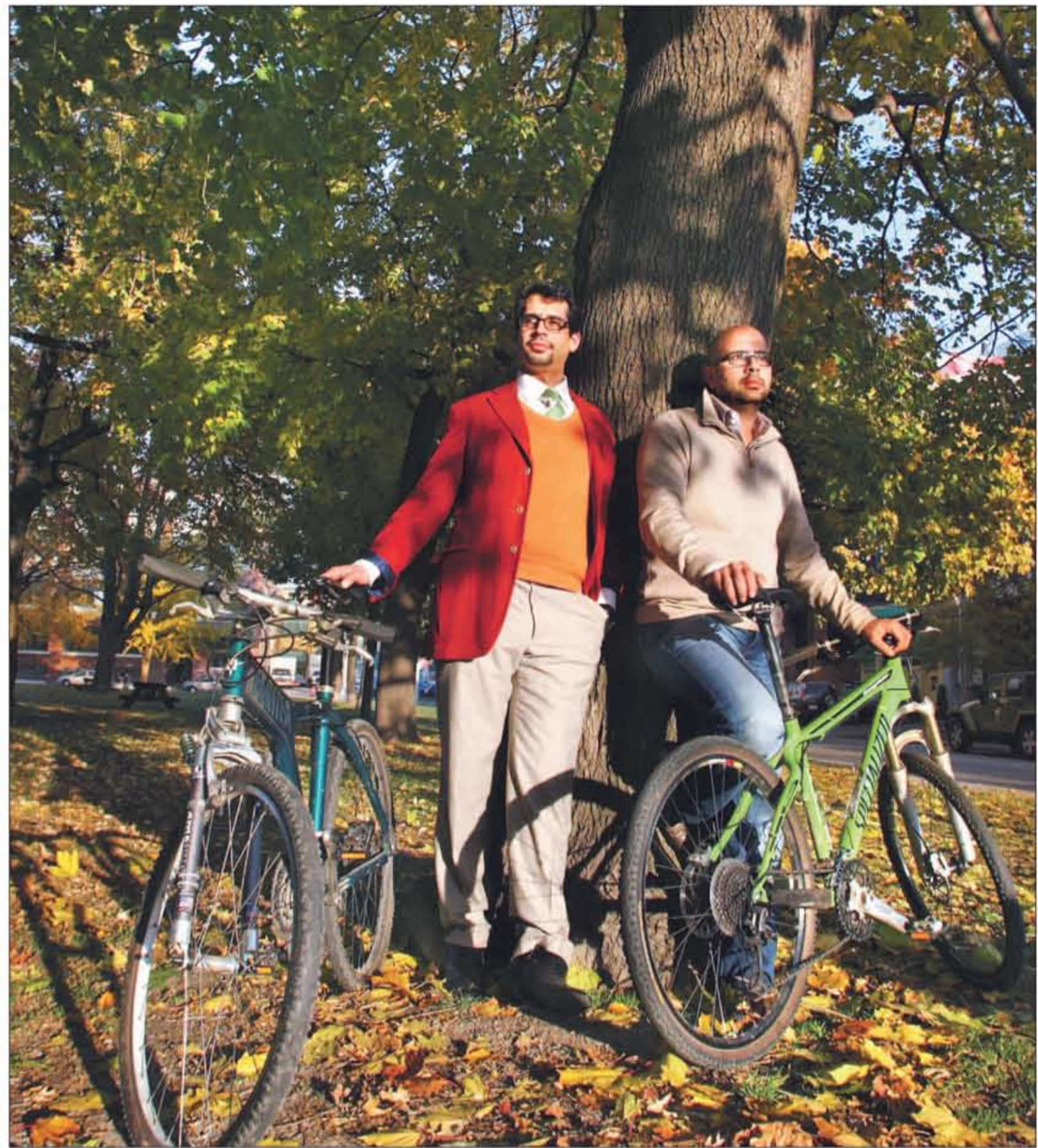


**ANTIQUES**  
Yesterday's treasure  
not as valuable today  
**PAGE CO4**

**ARCHITECTURE**  
Carlton St. is  
stuck in limbo  
**PAGE CO2**

**BEYOND THE BRICKS** MAZYAR MORTAZAVI

## Leading the charge



COLIN O'CONNOR/TORONTO STAR

Mazyar Mortazavi, right, owns TAS DesignBuild and works with brother Kamyar. Both enjoy cycling together through Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods.

Young developer is on the cutting edge of change without losing his sense of social and environmental responsibility

**GAIL SWAINSON**  
REAL ESTATE REPORTER  
By any measure, Mazyar Mortazavi is a most undeveloper-like developer. The principal of family firm TAS DesignBuild liberally sprinkles his conversation with phrases like "environmental and cultural responsibility," and "positive social impact." Mortazavi sometimes sounds more like a sociologist than the standard issue developer. Yet it's all a perfect fit for the 32-year-old ar-

chitect who relishes being on the leading edge of change. "We are committed to city building," Mortazavi says. "Right now in Toronto, we are at the crux of big changes and we want to lead the way on a global level." Mortazavi isn't content to erect yet just another same-old, same-old condo tower: he wants to craft something memorable, something that compels Torontonians to look up. "We are always pushing things in

the design context," he adds. Mortazavi has developed a reputation in the industry as a visionary with a strong social and environmental conscience, whose buildings reflect his progressive urban — and urbane — point-of-view. "We don't see ourselves as condo builders," he says over a recent lunch at Yorkville's Hazelton Hotel with brother Kamyar. "We help people to facilitate their lifestyle." **DEVELOPER** continued on CO5

## Building with society in mind

**DEVELOPER** from CO1

It is impossible to reference Mortazavi and his firm's success without also talking about family: parents Babak and Tooran, and particularly, Kam. In personality, Mortazavi is point-counterpoint to the 30-year-old Kam, an urban planner who is also a partner in the family construction firm started by their parents in 1983 after a move from Iran. Where Mortazavi comes across as an intense, driven, uncompromising — almost solitary — perfectionist, Kam is his charmingly affable, easy-going foil. "We each bring something to the table that the other doesn't," Kam says. "Otherwise, it wouldn't work at all." But make no mistake — Kam shares the family vision for improving Toronto's urban landscape, one TAS DesignBuild condo at a time. "We have a passion for making this a better city," Kam says as he downs frites drizzled with truffle oil.

**6** We see this neighbourhood as rich and diverse. One of the last, untapped, up-and-coming areas in the city  
**MAZYAR MORTAZAVI,**  
ON GIRAFFE'S LOCATION

The brothers live a few floors apart in the same condo building and although they have a busy outside social life, they spend much of their free time together or with their parents, who have a background in architecture and who the brothers meet for lunch every Tuesday to talk business. Mazyar and Kam also love biking around the city with their friends or whipping up gourmet meals. Biking also gives Mazyar a window into Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods, all while travelling in the slow lane, outside the protective cocoon of a vehicle. "It really gives you a very different sense of place," he says. The brothers credit their parents for shaping the firm's (and their own) strong value system that puts a priority on what is best for the community. "My parents had a vision of doing some-

thing good in this city and we are building on that foundation with a very strong core philosophy," Mazyar says. He adds that growing up in multicultural Toronto made him aware of diversity and what individuals bring to the collective table. "I know how to celebrate differences," he says. "I grew up bridging those gaps." The cornerstone of TAS DesignBuild's unique business philosophy is outlined in the company's credo, called the Four Pillars of Sustainability. "Everything we take on refers back to the four pillars," Mortazavi says. "It is what drives the vision of the company and it informs everything we do." The four pillars start with the firm's stated commitment to "fostering a positive impact on the social fibre of local and global communities." The support of innovative local art and culture comes next, followed by showing a respect for nature by developing ecologically sensitive projects. Finally, the firm pledges to foster economic prosperity in the communities in which it builds. "The four pillars also represent our family's four members," he adds. "The sense of what our family brings in the creation of homes for other families." It all fits into the purposeful vision Mortazavi brings to his much-heralded Toronto condo developments. "It's a very comprehensive approach with every step relating back to the principals of the four pillars," he says. Mortazavi's firm has been the spark behind some of Toronto's most interesting condo developments — such as M5V on King St. W., east of Spadina Ave.; dia, west of Yonge St. and south of Finch Ave.; zed on Bathurst St., south of King; and his latest offering, Giraffe. Giraffe, a cantilevered condo that resembles the lanky denizen of the African savannah, is being hailed for its innovative Teeple Architects design. The condo is still in the approval stage at the city and is slated for the key Bloor St. W. and Dundas St. W. junction. "We see this neighbourhood as rich and diverse," Mortazavi says. "One of the last, untapped, up-and-coming areas in the city." Giraffe will have allotment gardens and an 8,000 to 10,000-square-foot amenity area with yoga, party and dining rooms. "It's what people want," he adds. Mortazavi doesn't see himself as a design trendsetter, but more as an interpreter of what is happening in the community at large. "We're not looking at trends," he says. "We're looking at social shifts that create change."