

Globe Real Estate

CONDO DESIGN

An intersection of development and community



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The intersection of Dundas Street West and Bloor Street is one of the busiest hubs in the west end. It's also a hodgepodge of kiosks, manicure shops and sketchy taverns serving sketchier food.

The northwest corner is a particular blight, with a dilapidated strip mall looking out onto a transit hub containing the Dundas West subway station and the terminus of several buses and streetcars. But it's also where several residential neighbourhoods converge, from the working-class Junction community to the family oriented Bloor West Village and Roncesvalles Village to the newly affluent streets surrounding High Park.

Over the past five years, several small- to mid-scale condominium and loft projects have been launched throughout the neighbourhood, and most have sold quickly, with buyers attracted to the freewheeling artisan bent of the surrounding community and the greenery of nearby High Park.

Condos have become a fact of life there, so residents have banded together to have a voice in the neighbourhood's future development.

The corner of Dundas and Bloor is now slated to be the site of a 29-storey high-rise condo, a project under the direction of TAS DesignBuild, designed by Teeple Architects. It has no name as yet, and the developer won't launch sales until spring, 2008, at the earliest. The development applications have only recently been filed. But the work of winning over the community is in full swing.

"With these kinds of situations, you have a certain number of very vocal people coming out. We started the community consultation process before we started the application process," said Mazyar Mortazavi, a principal of TAS DesignBuild.

"We've had three meetings so far [with Friends of Dundas and Bloor] and we've been successful in addressing issues that are relevant to our project and how they related to overall city issues."

The scale is definitely a couple of steps up compared with other condo projects in the surrounding area, but it is not

out of whack with the decades-old high-rise apartment towers across the street to the east and south of the site.

Normally, height is the overriding concern of a condominium design, and some developers have placated residents by lopping a few storeys off their initial concept.

"We want to be up front with residents, and the reasons why it is the height that it is," Mr. Mortazavi said. "We don't want to negotiate our way down."

TAS Design Build comes to the table with an excellent portfolio, specifically in terms of supplying textured, attractive and livable designs that reflect well long after the rendering stage.

These include Dia, an 18-storey glass high-rise at Yonge and Finch streets that has just been completed, featuring a seamless transition of townhouses, lofts and suites in a highly conceptualized environment.

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Mazyar Mortazavi, a principal of TAS DesignBuild

Earlier this year, the company launched M5V, named after the postal code of a boutique-style, 30-storey community at King and Spadina streets in the downtown theatre district. In May, this project earned the company the Greater Toronto Home Builders Association award for best building design and best high-rise community.

Mr. Mortazavi reports that M5V is about 55 per cent sold, with construction beginning soon. Prices range from \$233,000 for 501 square feet to \$5-million for a massive three-level 4,000-square-foot penthouse with 1,700 square feet of outdoor space, including a rooftop terrace.

"Building design is a sociopolitical phenomenon. For us, it is an uncompromising aspect of our brand," Mr. Mortazavi said.

"Developers have a responsibility toward city-building, not just on the bottom-line profit. When the bar is raised in terms of one building that has expanded the boundaries of good design, the whole industry recognizes the bar has been raised."