

April 7, 2012

Street Smarts: The other Upper East Side



Condo owners Alex and Alice Law (right) pose with their friends Jeff and Jacqueline Yeung in the lobby of St. Gabriel Terrace
Aaron Lynett/National Post

By Suzanne Wintrob
Special to National Post

Toronto has a love affair with the condo, with 28,466 new-build units purchased in 2011. Thousands more are planned. Suite size, price, amenities and architecture are important, but more and more, a building's neighbourhood is being considered the ultimate draw. The ninth part of a lengthy series examining the GTA's new condo 'hoods.

Alice Law was in her mid-20s when she decided it was time to move out of her parents' home in the Upper Beach. She knew she wanted a condo but wasn't sure where.

Downtown seemed a natural choice, so she could be close to some of her friends. But she worked as a pharmaceutical medical information specialist in Don Mills and that would mean a trek.

Then Ms. Law caught wind of Shane Baghai's St. Gabriel Terrace near Sheppard and Bayview. Having come from a house, she felt a mid-rise building would be "a little more homey" than a typical downtown high-rise tower. And because Ms. Law was in her prime career-building years, she relished an address that would make it easy to get to and from work regardless of where her next job might be.

Though single when she moved into the one-bedroom-plus-terrace three years ago, Ms. Law now shares the condo with her husband, Alexander, a commercial mortgage broker who spends much of his work week in Vancouver. They love the convenience of living along the Sheppard corridor, particularly because it's close to the highway, the Go Train and the East Don Lands' scenic trails.

Their evening jogs often take them through the neighbourhood's winding side streets, past the spacious lots with large backyards and mature trees, and down to the ravine. And when they're hungry, they hop in the car for a short drive to Wonderpho at York Mills and Leslie, Congee Wong at Finch and Leslie, or the Shops at Don Mills for dinner and drinks at Joey, Linda Modern Thai and Bier Markt.

"This whole Bayview area has that community feel," Ms. Law says. "It has good restaurants and entertainment but it's not as congested as downtown. And there's still lots of room for development, with commercial and residential buildings going up," she says. "When I think about accessibility, even just commute and travel-wise, it's convenient no matter where work might take me."

It's these sentiments that have not only upped housing prices around Bayview Village shopping centre but also heralded the development of a slew of new condominium projects along the Sheppard corridor. According to Urbanation, there are 14 condominium projects — some with multiple towers — on the go or in the works between Highway 401 and Steeles Avenue and between Kenneth Avenue and Victoria Park Avenue (an area that includes the Sheppard corridor),

made up of more than 3,600 suites. Add in the fact that light rail transit along Sheppard is now the talk of the town, it's no wonder life on Toronto's upper east side has garnered the spotlight.

"The Sheppard corridor started in 1995 when the first environmental assessment for the subway started and the digging began," explains Leo DeSorcy, manager of urban design in North York district for the City of Toronto's planning department. "But the real interest wasn't there until the subway opened in 2003 and then there's just been incredible development interest up along the corridor. The marketing people from Daniels and Tridel and Menkes — the major players here — and the campaigns they use to market their residential units, it's very much the subway and the highway. It's really a kind of central location with very good transportation options."

Jacqueline and Jeffrey Yeung, both in their early 30s, are also enamoured of the area. Ms. Yeung grew up in Scarborough while her husband is from Orillia. They had been living in a King West condo but after two years in the city found themselves craving more space. The neighbourhood around Bayview Village just felt right.

"We wanted to move to a family-friendly neighbourhood where there was a little bit more space to garden, access to better schools, and that was close to transit like the Sheppard corridor," Ms. Yeung recalls. "Knowing that they had built a subway running along Sheppard, we thought this would be a good location. And with Jeffrey's family living in Orillia and [mine] in Scarborough, it would be very central and convenient for both of us."

The Yeungs moved into their three-bedroom bungalow a year and a half ago. Like Ms. Law, Ms. Yeung is smitten with the lush surroundings, be it lounging in her big backyard among the mature trees, biking along the trails of the East Don Lands ravine, or sitting at the bank of the river "and just listening to the water trickle through." When she's there, her former life on King West seems a million miles away.

Given the growing attention on the Sheppard corridor, retailers are evolving to cater to the younger thirtysomething demographic. Fairview Mall, for example, underwent a \$92-million renovation a few years back for its 40th anniversary

and introduced stores such as Apple, Hollister, Bench and Aeropostale “that were relevant to a growing urban community,” says marketing director Winnie Wong.

Global brands and technology innovation have created the largest shift in Fairview today versus a few years ago, she adds, with the mall now offering a broader range of electronics as well as new ways to interact and communicate with shoppers including an eMagazine, eFlyers and a Facebook page. Fairview gets about 12 million visitors annually, many of those local residents.

Farther west, fashionable Bayview Mall is also popular. Residents flock to shop at Loblaws, Pusateri’s (a gourmet food store), Chapters, the Toronto Public Library and to find clothing by designers such as Brian Bailey and Ross Mayer.

In fact, Anissa Sham specifically chose her condo because it was close to Bayview Village.

Ms. Sham, the mother of a teenage son who attends a midtown private school, currently lives in a downtown condo and works in Scarborough as an operations manager. This month, she’ll be the proud owner of a condo at Daniels’ NY Place, an eight-floor, 135-unit building at Sheppard and Bayview. Ms. Sham is excited to be steps from her favourite upscale mall, as well as the YMCA and the subway. She also plans to shop at the area’s Chinese supermarkets.

“[This area is] closer to my work, and I love being at Bayview Village,” Ms. Sham says of her decision to buy on the Sheppard corridor. “I see the potential to grow in that neighbourhood price-wise, because I have to consider not just to live but to build up my equity on my property. As a single mother, I’m looking to making a profit, too.

Street Smarts: The good Sheppard corridor

By Suzanne Wintrob

Clifford Korman and his team at Kirkor Architects and Planning are immersed in condos. On the Sheppard corridor alone, the senior partner, architect and urban

planner has been overseeing the design of more than of 20 condominium towers. Why? Because “Sheppard is a great street and I believe in it,” Mr. Korman says.

Among Kirkor’s current projects are Tridel’s Hullmark Centre, Rockport Group’s Twenty One Clairtrell and Phantom Development’s Jade Condominiums.

Given the 25- to 40-year-old demographic that’s moving in, Mr. Korman is building suites with bold designs to hold their interest. He says many buyers are immigrants — or children of immigrants — from Korea, Iran and Asia who “like modern-contemporary-with-lots-of-glass buildings and they like high-end finished spaces. They don’t need big areas — they’re not used to it — and they’re pleased to buy smaller units at top-quality fitments.”

Empty nesters, though, are “a rarity in the Sheppard corridor,” Mr. Korman says. Instead, they’re moving farther south to Eglinton and Bayview for larger, more luxurious 1,200- to 2,000-sq.-ft. units such as those at Kirkor-designed Blythwood at Huntington by Tridel.

Here’s a sampling of projects:

Argento

26 storeys, 290 units (plus nine townhomes not yet released) Builder Tridel
Location Don Mills and York Mills Suite Availability 77% sold. From 550 to 998
sq. ft. and priced from \$288,000 to \$509,000 Hot Tickets Nestled within the
Don Ravine system and overlooking the Donalda Golf and Country Club Status
Open to the public Occupancy Summer 2014 Contact 416-663-1818;
tridel.com

Blythwood at Huntington

Nine storeys, 118 units (Blythwood is the first of two towers in the Huntington
community) Builders Tridel and Concert Properties Location Bayview and
Lawrence Suite Availability 70% sold. Two-bedrooms from 1,121 to 2,879 sq.
ft. and priced from \$755,000 to \$1,925,000 Hot Tickets Nine-ft. ceilings,
LEED candidate Status Under construction Occupancy Spring 2013 Contact
416-485-1900; tridel.com

Burkebrook

21 three-storey condominium townhomes Builder The Daniels Location
Bayview and Lawrence Suite Availability Only four townhomes remain. 1,947 to
more than 2,000 sq. ft. and priced from the mid \$900,000s to \$996,900 Hot
Tickets Double-car garage, charming front porch, gas fireplaces, large outdoor
cedar-decked terrace and lush landscaping; residents can enjoy the private
amenities of the Kilgour Club, a recreational, fitness and social hub located in
Phase 1 of Kilgour Estate Status Under construction Occupancy 2012
Contact 416-489-7333; TheBurkebrookTowns.com

Canterbury Lawrence Park

A collection of 174 townhomes Builder Tribute Communities Location
Bayview and Blythwood Suite Availability From 1,650 to 1,997 sq. ft. and
priced from \$697,990 to \$1,096,990 Hot Tickets Situated in a park-like ravine
setting in a prestigious Bayview neighbourhood minutes to the exclusive
Granite Club; underground parking with direct suite access Status Under
construction Occupancy July 2013 Contact 647-352-2130; mytribute.ca

The Dream Tower at Emerald City

25 storey, 316 units — the third of six towers creating the Emerald City master-planned community Builder Elad Canada Location Sheppard and Don Mills Suite Availability 523 to 1,265 sq. ft. and priced from the mid-\$200,000s Hot Tickets Ground-floor lobby with concierge services, elegant sitting area with mail room, billiards area, theatre, indoor pool, outdoor terrace Status Tower 1 under construction Occupancy December 2014 Contact 416-492-0001; dreamtower.ca

Flaire

Two 11-storey towers with a four-storey podium, 296 units Builders FRAM Building Group and The Cadillac Fairview Location Lawrence and Don Mills Suite Availability From 504 to 1,100 sq. ft. and priced from mid-\$200,000s to mid-\$500,000s Hot Tickets Resort-like front courtyard, fireside lounge, self-serve pet spa, landscaped rooftop terrace with barbecue pits and Miami-inspired cabanas Status Sales office just opened Occupancy December 2014 Contact 416-445-8868; flairecondos.com

Leslie Boutique Residences

11 storeys, 182 units Builder Great Lands Location Old Leslie and Sheppard Suite Availability 90% sold. From 549 to 1,077 sq. ft. and priced from \$265,000 Hot Ticket Steps from Leslie Street subway station Status Under construction Occupancy Spring 2013 Contact 905-882-6636; leslieboutique.com

LIV LOFTS

14 storeys, 175 units Builder FRAM and Cadillac Fairview Location 75 The Donway West Suite Availability More than 70% sold. From 395 to 940 sq. ft., including both flats and four townhouse units and priced from the mid-\$200,000s Hot Tickets Retrofit conversion of an existing office tower into a loft-style condominium with 10-ft. ceilings; Club Liv rooftop for outdoor movies under the stars, a hot tub with panoramic views of the city, al fresco dining and barbecuing, indoor/outdoor fireplace, sun tanning deck and private lounges Status Pre-construction Occupancy Mid-2013 Contact 416-445-5638; livlofts.com

ALTO and PARKSIDE at Atria

First phase in the Atria community, Alto is a 43-storey, 578-unit tower connected to the eight-storey Parkside by a grand central lobby and courtyard entrance. Builder Tridel. Location Sheppard and Highway 404. Suite Availability 66% sold. 545 to 1,207 sq. ft. and priced from \$288,000. Hot Tickets Party room with bar and fireplace lounge, private dining room and billiards lounge. Status Now open. Occupancy 2015. Contact 416-645-8866; tridel.com

Reflections

12 storeys, 106 units. Builders FRAM and Cadillac Fairview. Location 85 The Donway West. Suite Availability Only three units remain, all 1,225-sq.-ft., two-bedroom plus den priced from \$605,900. Hot Tickets Inaugural condominium building at Shops at Don Mills, seeking LEED certification. Status Under construction. Occupancy Spring 2013. Contact 416-442-2555; residencesatdonmills.ca

Scenic III

18 storeys, 316 units plus 10 townhomes Builder Aspen Ridge Homes
Location Leslie and Eglinton Suite Availability 75% sold. From 425 to 907 sq.
ft. and priced from \$187,990 to \$438,990, townhomes from the mid-
\$600,000s Hot Tickets Styled like a hilltop European village with grade-related
townhomes and cascading terraces leading gradually to the taller towers, and
street lamps and benches dotting the pathways Status Open for sales
Occupancy Spring 2014 Contact 416-805-1781; scenicliving.ca

St. Gabriel Manor

Eight floors, 96 units Builder Shane Baghai Location Bayview and Sheppard
Suite Availability Only two suites left: a 705-sq.-ft. one-bedroom plus den for
\$408,000 and a 1,035-sq.-ft. two-bedroom for \$595,000 Hot Tickets
European inspired architectural detailing, balconies, covered entranceway and
classic brick exterior; each floor has different colour palette and theme inspired
by the builder's travels to Europe Status Complete Occupancy Now Contact
416-250-6611; shanebaghai.ca

Twenty One Clairtrell

Seven storeys, 128 units Builder The Rockport Group Location Sheppard and
Bayview Suite Availability 98% sold. From 535 to 1,572 sq. ft. and priced from
\$299,900 to \$1,180,900 Hot Tickets Walking distance to Bayview Village and
TTC; sixth-floor residents' terrace and private terraces for seventh-floor
penthouses Status Under construction Occupancy Fall 2012 Contact
416-229-2110; twentyonecondos.com