

# NATIONAL POST

December 16, 2017

## The One to watch

*The One condo, expected to be the tallest building in the country when it's done, will be ready for occupancy in the spring of 2023*

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**Special to National Post**

Sam Mizrahi didn't intend to construct the tallest building in Canada when he and his team sat down to hash out a unique design for a new luxury residential condominium tower at the southwest corner of Yonge & Bloor streets, one of downtown Toronto's busiest intersections.

"That wasn't the brief," insists the president of Mizrahi Developments. "It's not what we set out to do. It wasn't even on the radar."

What he did want, though, was to put his beloved Toronto on the world stage. And in his opinion, there was only one way to do it: create something so remarkable that it would not only woo well-heeled buyers looking for an iconic address but also attract big-name international retailers searching for large, unhindered spaces.

Truth be told, it's hard to tell who came to Mizrahi's mind first: those who will live at the 85-storey tower he's calling The One or those who will be selling their wares there. Still, ask him why the city needs such a tall tower and he starts unraveling the story of how it got so high.

The mandate from the get-go, it seems, was to create what he calls an "uncontaminated" retail format on par with that found in world-class cities like New York, Chicago, London, Paris, Tokyo and Rome. Other buildings on that stretch of Bloor Street – dubbed Toronto's Mink Mile for its array of upscale designer shops like Gucci, Chanel, Tiffany & Co. and department store Holt

Renfrew – are older and have columns or pillars that run through the retail spaces, he explains.

To get us on par with famous high streets like New York’s Fifth Avenue, Chicago’s Magnificent Mile and Paris’s Champs Élysées, the tower’s retail space needed super-high ceilings and unobstructed floor space. Add in a 10-floor hotel plus 10-foot high ceilings in the residential suites and the building kept climbing upwards.



**A rendering of the view from a suite in The One.**

**Courtesy of Mizrahi Developments**

“When you start with that vision ... you end up with a building that’s 1,005 feet,” says Mizrahi, who built high-end custom homes before branching out to luxury condo projects such as 131 Hazleton and 181 Davenport in the toney Yorkville neighbourhood nearby. “It wasn’t done the other way around.”

No doubt, The One, with occupancy estimated to be in the spring of 2023, is the one to watch these days as construction gets underway.

Unlike typical concrete condominium towers that are mostly windows, the new building, which will be 1,005 feet tall, will boast of a hybrid exoskeleton featuring diagonal steel pieces framed by eight distinctive mega-columns rising up the tower. They're not only visually appealing but they're six times stronger than a traditional highrise structure in order to carry much of the load of the building onto its perimeter.

This will give retailers at grade their column-free uncontaminated space and allow corner suites to have minimal structure for unobstructed panoramic views. The horizontal and diagonal framing elements will be clad in a champagne bronze colour and a special lighting scheme to add intrigue and warmth.

In a nod to site's rich history, the building will also incorporate stones from famed men's store Stollerys that stood on the site for a century. Further, two heritage buildings on Yonge Street that housed one of Canada's first ballet schools will be incorporated as part of the complex. Underground, The One will connect to the PATH system and subway lines.

"Architecture and art are symbiotic," says Mizrahi of the design by British architecture firm Foster+Partners, which also designed University of Toronto's Leslie L. Dan Pharmacy Building.

"When you do something where there's a creative element to it, we can label it as iconic, or give it whatever definition, or meaning, or term we want. But really what it all means at the end of the day is that you're creating art. You're expressing art through the building. It's something you look at, you live in, you feel it, you wear it in a way that is much more expressive than just the functionality of housing." Inside, it will be the best in five-star living with 24/7 valet parking, a sprawling outdoor amenity terrace and infinity pool, fitness studio and spa lounge.

In contrast to the 76-storey, 789-unit tower called One Bloor across the street, The One will have just 416 units ranging from 591- to 8,000- sq. ft., with prices starting from \$789,900. ("That was intentional. I wanted every element of the building to symbolize Toronto," says Mizrahi.) Units can be combined or made to measure. Residences begin on the 14th floor, with an undisclosed five-star, 170-suite hotel, restaurants and retail situated beneath.

As for the penthouses, there are only four and two have already been sold to local buyers. The three-storey, 6,350-sq.-ft. units starting at \$22 million each have fireplaces and a private glass-enclosed rooftop deck with a small pool, barbecue, outdoor kitchen, winter garden and the best views money can buy.

The condos will have nine- or 10-foot coffered ceilings, high-end kitchens with Miele appliances and marble and stone throughout.

“The feeling is very warm and contemporary but with references that are slightly more traditional,” says Giles Robinson, senior partner at Fosters+Partners in London, England, which is also doing the interiors. The condos will take a cue from the champagne exterior.

“The champagne bronze material is very rich material and has a delicate sophistication that people aren’t used to seeing,” Robinson says. “It’s like a white gold. It’s quite light in colour but has a slight warm tint to it ... That palette, together with the frame, will create a very strong image for the building and will be very distinctive in this pivotal node of the city.”

The presentation centre is open by appointment only and will be open to the public on Jan. 13.

While it all sounds exciting, not everyone buys the argument that Toronto needs another skyscraper – especially one that’s only in reach of those living large. According to a study called *Bedrooms in the Sky* released last month by Urbanation and Ryerson University’s Ryerson City Building Institute, 38 per cent of the 94,000 condo units to be completed in the next five years in the Greater Toronto Area will be two-bedrooms or larger and 55 per cent will be one bedroom or one-plus-den. In central Toronto, half will be in buildings 36 storeys or taller.

“It paints a picture that we’re predominantly building condo towers that are tall and small,” says Cherise Burda, the institute’s executive director, explaining they won’t accommodate today’s millennials as they get older and start families.

“That doesn’t mean it’s not OK to build a highrise at Yonge and Bloor,” she says. “It’s the intersection of the busiest transit lines in the country. It’s very transit-friendly so it’s good to put more density there. We wouldn’t want to put low-density buildings there. Do we need to build 85 storeys? Maybe not, but it’s appropriate to have more density there.”

That said, she’s more bothered by what happens at the ground level of tall buildings.

“When a development is taking up so much space in the sky, it should come with creating really good public spaces at the ground level,” says Burda. “We should be looking at what the development is giving back to the neighbourhood and the community.”

Thankfully, Mizrahi and his team appear to have that covered. Not only will the retail offerings be outstanding, he promises, but the 30-ft. sidewalk setbacks – with landscaping, seating and a courtyard featuring seasonal art – will open up the public realm to transform The One into “a destination” and a unique pedestrian experience that reflects the busy intersection’s energy.

“We’re doing something in Canada that’s really moving the needle and creating incredible admiration globally for world-class architecture in Toronto and Canada,” says Mizrahi. “Hopefully this will inspire more of these types of buildings to be built in Canada. That’s what I’m most proud of.”