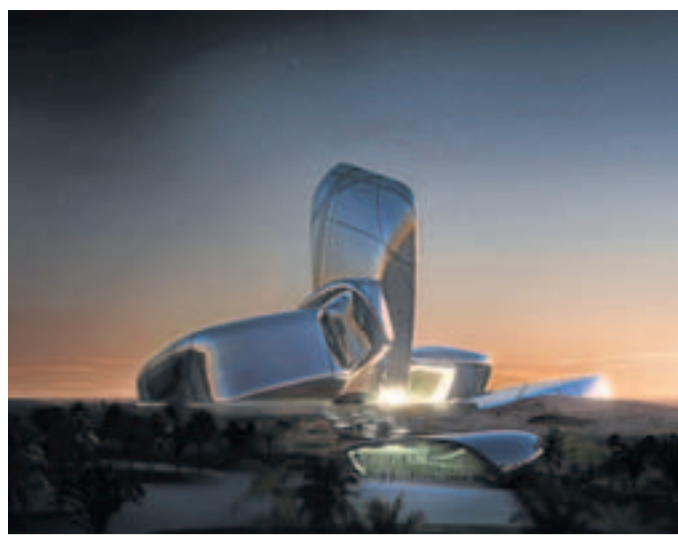




### Home of the Week

Tandem Cabbagetown worker's cottages are combined in an artful embrace  
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### John Bentley Mays

Norwegian architect Craig Dykers brings his unconventional outlook to Toronto  
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## THE MARKET

# Building momentum

It's bread and circuses at the local condo sales office as developers vie for buyers' attentions

BY SYDNIA YU

Reset by stiff competition and uncertain buyers, condo builders are turning more and more to theatrics to attract customers and keep them interested as their buildings rise out of the ground.

By day, their sales centres display floor plans, miniature buildings and model suites for visitors to browse. But by night, these showrooms are being transformed into circus tents with roaming buskers or galleries of fine art, fashion and race cars, or private dining rooms catered by celebrity chefs.

"Given this hyper-competitive condo market, developers are looking at ways to distinguish their projects and expand their communications approach beyond traditional advertising, social media and earned editorial," says Danny Roth, whose company, Brandon Communications Inc., helped three builders throw parties this week.

"As a result, we have been increasingly called upon to work with clients to help them create events – opportunities to connect with their consumers – that drive awareness and understanding of a new condo's unique message and brand positioning."

Vicki Griffiths, who is a principal of Vicbar Marketing, also has an increasing number of builders asking for assistance organizing events throughout the year.

"If a project is having a tough time selling, then they're going to turn to events to figure out how to get people in here," she says.

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"Our clients spend hundreds of thousands – upwards of \$1-million – on their sales centres because when you ask someone to make one of the most important decisions of their lives ... they want to come in and get an experience"

Condo marketer Danny Roth

Above, Gillian Vanderburgh, Alexa Jardin and Diane Vincent from Yorkville boutique Hugo Nicholson mingle in the crowd at an event hosted Tuesday night by Tridel to publicize their Republic condominium. Left, kids at Camp Heathwood show off their hip hop moves.

PHOTOS BY SARAH DEA FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL AND HERON GROUP



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## THE MARKET

## Partnerships and parties aim to draw attention

Those who accomplish that feat understand the marketing power behind public praise of a well-manufactured soiree.

"If you go back to what we did at DNA 1 and 2, our whole philosophy was word-of-mouth marketing," says Riz Dhanji, who is the vice-president of sales and marketing for Canderel Stoneridge.

"We want it to be a talking point between them, their friends, their co-workers and their family."

For a preview event held yesterday for the project's third and final phase, the builder created a facsimile of DNA-3's rooftop terrace inside its 7,000-square-foot sales office, complete with sand, cabanas and daybeds, plus models in bathing suites.

"We want to show people what DNA is about and why it's so different," says Mr. Dhanji. "We're really going to showcase the lifestyle of living at DNA."

Guests were also encouraged to use a mini studio to "express their DNA" and take home a personalized souvenir. "They'll be able to have an ad done of themselves with their own DNA and take that home with them and show their friends," Mr. Dhanji explains.

Putting together a fun and entertaining event can be easy, but an effective one involves a great deal of strategic planning to successfully attract a project's target audience.

Earlier this week, Mr. Roth organized an event called "Haute at the Republic" to draw attention to Tridel's mid-town condo tower Republic, featuring a stylishly designed new model suite with furnishings from the nearby Art Shoppe; cuisine courtesy of celebrity chef Mark McEwan and North 44; and couture represented by models dressed in gowns by Yorkville boutique Hugo Nicholson.

"They're trying to draw attention to a new model suite for their Signature Collection, which are their bigger, more expensive units," says Mr. Roth, who notes that prices start at \$1-million. "So, you had to do something upscale, something that had style and cachet."

Forming partnerships with restaurants and shops not only cross-promotes local attractions, but also illustrates that a priceless experience is possible by being resourceful.

"You could spend \$100,000 or do it for \$5,000," says Ms. Griffiths. "Sometimes you need to go big and other times you don't."

During the development of Festival Tower, the film-inspired condominium completed above the Toronto International Film Festival headquarters, Daniels Corp. three annual events to coincide with the excitement surrounding the festivities in September.

At last year's party, guests were given security passes and walked the red carpet lined with paparazzi. They could also pose for professional photographers in vignettes from



Chef Mark McEwan chats with Tridel's Agata Chudolinska at the Haute at the Republic event Tuesday evening. SARAH DEA FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Camp Heathwood kids do some artwork. PHOTO COURTESY HERON GROUP

*Ghostbusters, Saturday Night Fever and The Wizard of Oz*, complete with costumes, props and life-size character cutouts.

"There were lineups for these things," says Rhoda Eisenstadt, who is a partner at the Communications Group Inc., which has handled about 180 events for developers like Daniels in the past year.

"We try to do something that's very memorable and fun, and often, there's also a picture that you could take away."

On Wednesday, Graywood

Developments, gave potential buyers at the Residences at Ritz-Carlton a taste of the finest vintages and delicacies to be served at the five-star hotel below the luxury residences.

"Chef tastings are always very popular," says Ms. Eisenstadt.

"[These events] can cost substantially less than an ad in The Globe and Mail, or substantially more, depending on how many people are invited and what's involved."

"Our clients spend hundreds of thousands - upwards of \$1-million - on their sales

centres because when you ask someone to make one of the most important decisions of their lives ... they want to come in and get an experience," says Mr. Roth.

At the sales centre for River City, a master-planned community on the former West Don Lands, Urban Capital will host three public forums with high-profile speakers to engage purchasers and local residents.

Earlier this week, former Ontario premier and 2015 Pan Am Games bid chairman David Peterson and Vancouver

2010 Olympic Village architect Stuart Lyon led the first discussion on the impact of major sports events on residential communities.

In suburban neighbourhoods, events are often geared to strengthening the bond between builders and buyers.

Halminen Homes and more than 100 volunteer tradesmen built a 2,300-square-foot house in five days in the low-rise community Courtice Homestead to raise funds for the new critical care unit at Lakeridge Health Bowmanville.

"You could actually stand there and watch this house being erected before your very eyes," says Ms. Griffiths, who spread news of the achievement to the press in August. "It engages new purchasers, the community and the media."

At the Traditions sales office in Milton, Heathwood Homes regularly organizes events such as yoga classes and movie nights for neighbours to meet and socialize.

"This shows a real commitment to establishing a sense of community, which is so important in low-rise building," says Ms. Eisenstadt.

"This past summer and the summer before, they had Camp Heathwood up there, which was open to all the children of the residents," says Ms. Eisenstadt. "It was a two-week day camp ... with tons

of activities."

In other cases, the developers don't have to do any extra work to bring in a new crowd.

During the Toronto International Film Festival, the luxurious sales office for Pears on the Avenue in Yorkville was used by Toro magazine to host a series of exclusive events, from a VIP lounge to a gallery space for the New York Times Canadian Photo Archive exhibit curated by Caitlin Cronenberg.

"People who might not have ordinarily come into the sales office are exposed to the project," says Ms. Eisenstadt. "You may not want to buy, but you may have a friend looking."

In 2002, Canderel Stoneridge went so far as to construct a 2,000-square-foot event space next door to its DNA sales office with everything from a bar to audio/visual equipment.

"We'd give this out to event marketers and allow them to use the space at no charge as long as they brought in the clientele and the events that fit our demographic," says Mr. Dhanji.

The venue has housed Indy cars and fashion designers, as well as a South Asian home show the builder co-hosted with social networking website MyBindi.com. "That brought in a different demographic of people and that really worked out well for us," says Mr. Dhanji.

## GREEN HOMES

## A bright idea gets bank backing



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In a ground-breaking move for a financial institution, the Toronto-Dominion Bank has decided to go as green as its logo.

The main initiative is to get Canadians to install solar panels on their roofs and reduce the tyranny of non-renewable energy. To do that, the bank is running a national advertising campaign extolling the benefits - environmental and financial - of every home generating its own solar power and has introduced a new series of low-cost loans to let homeowners finance their conversion to solar power.

"It started about six months ago when Karen Clarke-Whistler, our chief environmental officer, got all the operating units of the bank together to see if we could come up with a bank-wide initiative to promote green energy," says Dom Cooper, manager of TD financing services.

"A bank-wide initiative like that was the first for us and we were able to come up with a



Consumer surveys convinced TD to get into the solar loans business. AP/STEPHAN SAVOIA

number of programs."

One of the things that persuaded the bankers to take solar power seriously was a survey the bank had done of 1,000 Canadians 25 years or older who owned their own home.

"It showed that while 47 per cent of Canadians are aware solar power can reduce home energy costs only 5 per cent understand that by installing solar panels they can actually make money from provincial

power authorities.

Other statistics gathered showed 91 per cent are aware green energy reduces the environmental impact of power generation but only 5 per cent have taken the step of installing their own solar-powered systems.

About 33 per cent have thought about installing solar panels but 75 per cent says cost is the number one deterrent.

"We decided there was a role

we could play on two fronts," says Mr. Cooper. "We could use traditional advertising to explain the financial benefits of solar power and we could create lending programs to make sense of the cost."

The first of those programs is a deal struck with solar panel installation companies across Canada. TD now provides them financing packages they can make available to customers, such as car dealers have instant financing

available from banks and other lenders.

"They can sit down in customers' living rooms, sign a contract and instantly make financing available," Mr. Cooper says.

That financing comes in the form of non-secured loans of up to \$50,000 amortized over 15 years.

The second option is new Green secured lines of credit. TD customers can get a line of credit to pay for solar panels and pay just 1 per cent above prime. The Green line also comes with a 1 per cent cash rebate. Take a loan for \$25,000 and immediately get \$250 back in cash.

But TD goes further than just lending money and letting customers figure out what to do with the power their solar panels generate. The new ad campaign, launched this month, explains how you can turn your solar-panel equipped roof into a domestic profit centre.

"We wanted to drive home the point that there is a strong business case to be made for solar panels," says Mr. Cooper.

He points out that many provinces now have plans where power companies purchase solar generated power from homeowners on long term contracts at very attractive rates.

A case in point is Ontario

Power Generation's MicroFit program where the OPG buys solar power at the rate of 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour from homeowners.

The result can be a 13 per cent to 15 per cent returns on investment over the projected 25-year lifespan of today's panels, he says.

"That has to be a lot better than getting maybe 2 per cent by putting your money into GICs," he says.

"The biggest challenge we face is that people are not aware investing in solar panels makes sense financially and is easy to do now. We think that once people start to understand those benefits and see financing is not a problem any more that the move towards homeowners generating solar power will really pick up in speed."

To help Canadians understand the steps they must take toward creating their own renewable energy, TD has even created a step-by-step guidebook called *Going Green: A Homeowners' Guide to Solar Energy*, available at [td.com/renewableenergy](http://td.com/renewableenergy).

Will TD's ad campaign and loans make a difference? The survey suggests they will. It said that 40 per cent of Canadians would indeed install solar panels on their roofs if financing was available to help meet upfront costs.