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NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS



Design by committee

In a rare move, Freed Developments sought input from many parties for the creation of 155 Redpath, a condo building in a neighbourhood that is a complete departure for the company *By Lindsay Forsey*

When designer Johnson Chou and developer Peter Freed teamed up for 155 Redpath Condos, their second project together, they did things differently. First, they ventured away from Mr. Freed's downtown domain, where his name is synonymous with the central King Street West neighbourhood dominated by his developments. Then, following the two-heads-are-better-than-one philosophy, they took a new approach to design.

"Normally it would be the Freed development team and our design team creating the vision for a project," Mr. Chou says. He is the man behind Johnson Chou Inc., whose portfolio includes The Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art and Blowfish Restaurant, as well as his previous collaboration with Mr. Freed, the 60 Colborne condo building. "This time we brought a lot of people with many ideas and different experiences to the table to help us shape the design narrative."

Executives from 155 Redpath's co-developer, CD Capital, along with architects, mechanical engineers, landscape designers

and marketing folks gathered around for the big brainstorm — even the real estate agents chimed in. "Bringing all of these different people together could have been a designer's nightmare," Mr. Chou says. "But it worked out favourably. Having someone from every facet of the project at the table meant that information and feedback was immediately accessible. It was very collaborative. We felt a bit like *The Brady Bunch*."

The large and diverse group created a storyboard comprised of inspiring images and text. "We were excited to have everyone together from the beginning to try to make this the most exciting project possible," Mr. Freed says. "In this case we found out that 20 heads are better than one."

Working together they created a vision for all of 155's components — architecture, design, amenities and outdoor spaces. And, ultimately, the development partners and designers went through a process of elimination, focusing in on the best ideas of the bunch that would guide 155's final design.

The sleek 36-storey, 470-unit tower will be constructed at

Redpath and Roehampton Avenues in the Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue neighbourhood (redpathcondos.com). Natural elements, earth, air, fire and water inspired the contemporary design: Future residents will be able to Zen out by cascading waterfalls in the common outdoor area or cozy up with friends around the firepit.

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The ground level surrounds will include open green space where folks can relax in the fresh air, while an indoor-outdoor yoga studio will be the perfect place to get centred with a few deep breaths. Suites include studios, one- and two-bedroom units, ranging from 396 to more than 800 square feet, priced from the mid-\$200,000s.

Uptown Yonge and Eglinton is a fast-growing and changing locale. The Yonge Eglinton

Centre is undergoing a multi-million-dollar renovation to include more shops as well as a rooftop park. Loblaws is planning a 40,000-sq.-ft. store in the neighbourhood and, by 2020 (if all goes as scheduled), area residents will be able to zip out to Pearson airport on the new Crosstown LRT system. Already, Yonge Street and Mount Pleasant Road are dotted with cool retailers and busy restaurants that bring a palpable vibrancy to the hood. The area will be even more lively and liveable when 155 Redpath's first residents move into their digs in Fall 2017.

The move north was certainly a new direction for Freed, whose developments are concentrated in the downtown core. "We were very thoughtful about everything the Freed brand represents and how to evolve into this new neighbourhood," Mr. Chou says. "Mr. Freed is a proponent of modernism and we are celebrating that with 155 Redpath."

Simple interiors are purposed to frame views of the surrounding landscaped areas, in keeping with the element-inspired design. A number of spaces, such as the yoga room,

flow from indoors to out. "We focused on creating both interior and exterior vignettes," Mr. Chou says. "A lot of detail has gone toward cultivating a calming experience. Modernism often gets brushed with the notion that it's abstract and austere, but this project has much functionality and delight."

Buyers will be downright tickled by the ninth-floor amenity space, which includes an outdoor pool and hot tub, complete with an outdoor shower, poolside cabana lounge, sunbathing spots and barbecues for al fresco dining. "The feeling at 155 Redpath is quieter and more reflective than the Freed developments in the King West entertainment district," Mr. Chou says.

Freed Developments has built its condo empire on foundations of lifestyle and design and this newest project follows suit. "Yonge and Eglinton is a spirited neighbourhood. You could argue that it's the centre of the city," Mr. Freed says. "Not everyone wants to live downtown, but that doesn't mean they don't want the same thoughtfulness in design and amenities."

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Peter Freed, left, and Johnson Chou in Mr. Freed's downtown office. They "were very thoughtful" about how to evolve the brand into a new neighbourhood.

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