

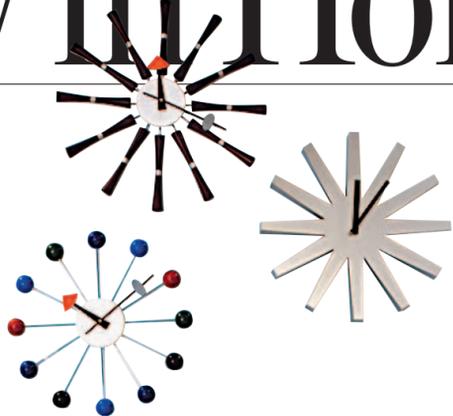
New in Homes & Condos

»TORONTO STAR«

SECTION H
SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 6, 2010
thestar.com

WHAT TIME IS IT?

It's time to take a ride into the past and create a thoroughly modern look, **H12**



KEEPING IT RAW

Toronto architect making sure former Kitchener tannery keep its patina, **H8**



BIRTH OF A CONDO PART III: MARKETING

Blade inspires some edgy marketing

Site gets wider buyer appeal with new tower combined with former skate factory for

In this five-part series, the Toronto Star follows the development of a highrise condominium — Blade in Brampton — from site selection through to the sales launch, offering an in-depth look at the logistical challenges and critical decisions that emerge along the way.

RYAN STARR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

If you happen to be riding the GO train through Brampton at some point in the near future, don't be alarmed if you get a random message on your BlackBerry or iPhone from Gerry Ryan.

It's part of what's known as "Bluetooth proximity marketing," a strategy Ryan's firm — Ryan Design Inc. — is hoping will generate buzz for Blade, a 26-storey highrise condo being built atop a defunct skate factory in Brampton.

The condo site and sales centre are across the road from a GO Transit station, and several years ago a large chunk of the factory property was sold to the transit authority to use as a parking lot.

To Ryan, all that daily commuter hustle and bustle right on Blade's doorstep represents a lucrative market "just waiting to be tapped."

With proximity marketing, every so often equipment set up in the condo's sales centre will send out a message to Bluetooth-enabled devices within a range of up to 600 feet.

The message will typically contain some kind of promotional offer — \$2,000 in upgrades, for example — enticing potential buyers to drop by the sales centre and find out more. (Once the person opens the message, Ryan gets his or her contact information for use when sending out future offers.)

"We can market to you sitting on the train going by, and get messages out to people who are parked all around," Ryan said during a recent interview at his Toronto studio.

"We're not just waiting there for people to come and see us. We're getting out there."

WHEN IT CAME to the marketing of Blade, a development that blends historic and contemporary architecture, Ryan appreciated having a unique project to work with.

BLADE continued on H10

RECYCLED CONDOS

More than the sum of its parts

Everything from the cement to the flooring can be made from recycled or repurposed materials, making the condo greener than ever

STEPHEN WEIR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It looks new. It smells fresh. It has a new home warranty. Yet, some of the parts of its sum have been around at least once before. Recycled materials are beginning to be used in the construction of new condos, not to save money but to save the planet.

When it comes to constructing Toronto condominiums *everything* old, from broken glass to discarded animal skin, is new again. Developers are using recycled materials in almost every aspect of the building cycle.

There isn't a totally recycled condominium in Canada . . . yet. But a number of new building projects offers a glimpse of the future fast approaching. One building uses century-old wood for flooring in new condos; another uses concrete blocks made with old broken wine bottles. Another has recycled leather car upholstery on the walls and floor.

"There is a consumer demand for all things green — including the use of recycled materials," explains Mark Cohen, founding partner of The Condo Store Marketing Systems. "And, at the same time, there are new developers coming on the market with a social conscience and a real desire to follow the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle)."

"We all have a responsibility in this day and age to preserve our environment and the communities that we live in," says Cohen. "It is good to see condo developers playing their part because their developments have a huge impact on the urban environment."

The Condo Store is a Toronto-based firm that specializes in marketing condominiums and large-scale subdivisions.

Bits and pieces of recycled material are being

RECYCLING continued on H10

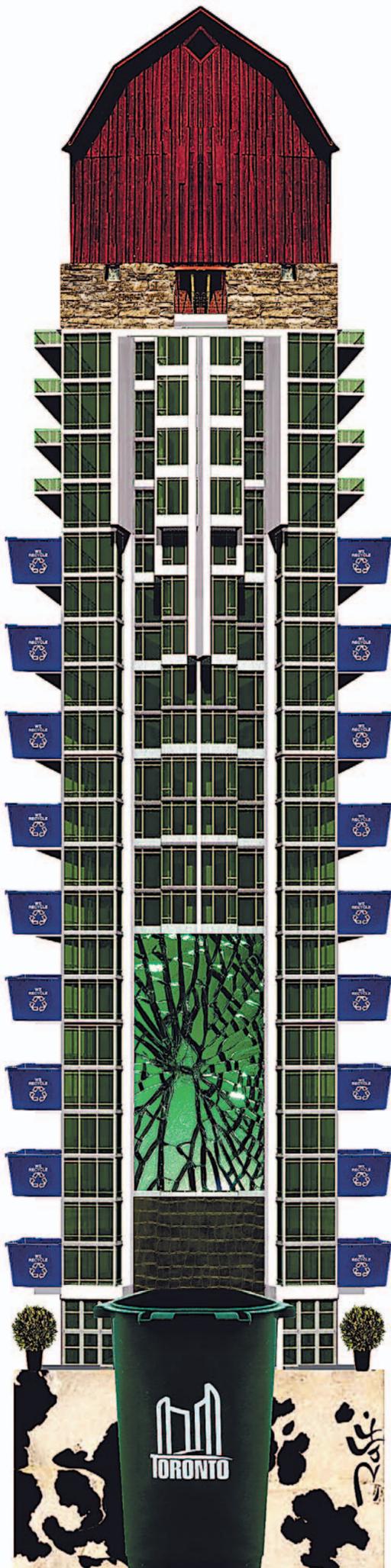


ILLUSTRATION BY RAFFI ANDERIAN / TORONTO STAR

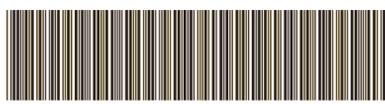
3 Places Where Family Enjoyment Is Always Available.



www.mattamyhomes.com

(see centre spread for details)





H10 ★ TORONTO STAR ★ SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2010

HOMES & CONDOS

Project name, amenities inspired by skating

BLADE from H1

"The fact that we had the skate factory was nice," he says. "We could sell modern and old at the same time, condominiums and lofts. We didn't have to get locked into the clichéd marketing that often comes with just lofts."

The former Dominion Skate factory also provided a ready-made theme for the project.

"We didn't want to call it the Dominion Skate building, because that would imply the whole building was a loft," he explains. "I thought Blade would be a cool name for an old building with a new tower."

The name proved to be a big hit with the project developer, the Preston Group.

"Sometimes you come up with something and the builder or salespeople don't like it, then there's a bit of a fight," Ryan says. "This one, I threw it on the table and it was like, 'That's it!' And it was done."

Ryan also hatched the idea for what has turned out to be Blade's big conversation piece: a skating rink in the courtyard that will convert to a walking track in summer.

"(Downtown) Brampton has Gage Park, which also has a skating rink," Ryan notes. "So it was great to be able to tie in with that."

Skating is the basis of the Blade logo: the silhouette of a figure skater. And the principal colour used in Blade's marketing materials and advertising is a turquoise blue, which helps to further evoke ice.

The skating motif has also figured prominently in Blade's ad copy. To wit:

- "Brampton's hottest condo has the coolest amenities."
- "Don't let this fabulous opportunity slip away."
- "The perfect place to break the ice."

A number of other classy skating touches were on display during Blade's preview opening for registrants last fall: a reception desk with a glass front that resembled



AARON HARRIS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Advertising guru Gerry Ryan, who specializes in marketing real estate projects, came up with Blade's name.

cracked ice; a cocktail bar made of actual ice; even a table with hockey stick legs.

Following her speech at the opening, Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell was presented with a pair of bob skates that had been manufactured at the Dominion Skate factory years ago (Blade publicist Danny Roth had found them on eBay).

"That was the icing on the cake," Ryan says.

The site's skate factory origins gave Roth, head of Brandon Communications, plenty to play with when it came to crafting the public relations campaign for Blade.

"For us it starts and ends with a story, and this project has a story," Roth says. "A PR guy goes crazy for something that has layers like an onion that you can peel off and talk about."

A good story also helps set Blade apart in a crowded and savvy real

estate market, he notes.

"There's so much product out there these days that you need to be able to find a way to position it differently, to look at it from a different perspective."

Roth's job has been to take Blade's various layers and pitch the stories to editors at a range of publications (including the *Star*, which is currently running a five-part series).

Given the goal is to generate momentum and interest in Blade, a bit of good press never hurts.

"Buyers these days are taking a more critical eye toward product launches as well as claims from developers and advertising and marketing," Roth says. "I think they look to editorial, which they see as a more independent voice, for validation."

Getting stories prominent placement in the right mix of media can certainly create interest in a pro-

ject. It also helps weed out unqualified purchasers from the get-go.

"You want to make sure you're driving the right purchaser to the sales centre," says Roth. "You're doing your best to educate them to make sure the ones coming through that door know what they're coming for."

THE MARKETING, SALES and public relations strategies for Blade have been tightly coordinated, with everyone usually working from the same game plan.

"The most successful projects are the ones that put together the right team and demand that they not take a silo approach," says Roth.

It's also essential, Ryan says, that a marketing team doesn't end up creating a campaign that is more about its own gratification than selling a product.

"If all I'm doing is getting laurels

BLADE: THE COLD, HARD FACTS

- **Units:** 350 (one-bedroom, two-bedroom and loft-style units).
- **Size range:** 570 to 1,500 square feet
- **Price:** From \$179,900
- **Amenities:** Skating oval that converts into a walking track in summer, fitness room, swimming pool, whirlpool, alfresco dining area, yoga room.
- **Nine-foot ceilings:** Throughout
- **Kitchens:** Granite countertops and stainless steel undermount sinks.
- **Bathrooms:** Cultured marble countertops, tempered glass shower stalls, ceramic wall tile in shower stalls, tub enclosures.
- **Grand opening:** Saturday, Feb. 13. Purchasers have a one-in-five chance of winning a car or a five-year GO train pass.
- **Online:** www.bladecondos.com

— Ryan Starr

for myself, thinking I created the greatest brochure in the world or the most elaborate sales office, then that's just wrong," he says. "Because I'm not thinking about the client (the developer) or buyer. I'm just thinking about me."

In the end, though, no matter how well a project like Blade is packaged and sold, regardless of how clever the name is or how cool the sales office looks, none of it matters much if the end product is sub-par.

"Even with all the hype, glamour and glitz that might come with (marketing a condo), at the core you're dealing with somebody who is buying a home," Roth says.

"People won't buy something they don't like," adds Ryan. "As a marketing person, you have to target the guy who's going to live there."

"Of course," he says after a brief pause, "anything will sell if it's the right price."

In condominium construction, everything old is new again

RECYCLING from H1

used all over Toronto and the rest of the country. Were these parts combined, the completely recycled condo tower could be created. Beginning under the dirt and working our way upward, the *Toronto Star* looks at the use of recycled materials.

GROUND LEVEL

When Pro-Green Demolition took down the massive Molson Brewery along Toronto's Lake Shore Blvd., it was able to recycle most of the concrete used in the block-long building. The concrete was pulverized and used as bedding material under the grounds and the roadway leading into the West Harbour City condo development, which replaced the old brewery.

Franco Provenzano, company president, says most of the concrete recovered did get used — be it on the Lake Shore or somewhere else in Toronto.

"That puppy (the beer factory) was overbuilt. There was at least 3,000 metric tonnes of recyclable steel (encased in the cement) in there. It was as though they were getting ready for World War III," says Provenzano, one of four brothers who own and operate ProGreen Demolition, a Concord company that specializes in recovering recyclable materials from buildings it tears down.

THE CONCRETE FOUNDATION

A York University building has it. Condo towers in California, British Columbia and the Majestic Court project in Unionville (Markham) also use it.

Some call it EcoSmart concrete, others have dubbed it fly ash concrete. It reduces the amount of cement used in concrete by replacing about half of it with blast furnace slag — fly ash — the residue left when coal is burned to produce power.

In 2001, York University built its large Computer Science Building using fly ash concrete. It was a test to see if concrete mixed with recycled fly ash could be a viable high-rise building material.

"No detrimental cost effects were experienced in this project. On the

contrary, fly ash costs about half the price of cement and is readily available. As well, the labour required to place fly ash concrete proved to be less than conventional concrete due to its workability," reports Busby & Associates Architects, the firm that oversaw the project.

BETWEEN THE WALLS

The ugly, rough concrete block has been a part of construction projects since the 1830s. The standard block is rectangular with two large holes in the middle (for metal tie beams).

Concrete blocks are often used in the walls and basements of housing projects. Now, the blocks are turning up at condo sites (including in Liberty Village), where they are used to build interior walls.

Originally, the recipe for the common block was a mixture of poured cement and sand.

Now, one Canadian company is making blocks from cement and pulverized glass harvested from Toronto blue boxes. "We are seeing it (being used) in higher-end condo projects," says Don Gordon, president and CEO of the Midland-based Atlas Block Co. Ltd. "There is a demand for our new concrete block (which he calls the PCR Block). Up to 30 per cent of the block is made from ground and processed glass."

"With the glass inside the cement there is less sound transference than with the old-style block, which is important for condo owners. They add an insulation value, they contribute significantly to builders looking to meet environmental building standards and they are cost competitive."

BETWEEN THE WALLS EVEN MORE

It is pink. It is green. It keeps out the heat and cold and dampens noise. Insulation is used in the walls between suites to reduce noise. It is also placed on outer walls to keep out the heat of summer and the cold of winter. The most popular forms are bales of fibreglass (often coloured pink) and rigid slabs of polystyrene insulation.

Canadian fibreglass insulation is a mixture of sand, glass and paper wrap. Both recycled glass and sand are rapidly replenished, inexhaust-

ible resources. Owens Corning Canada, a major supplier to the condo building industry, says they produce a recycled product that saves more than 12 times the energy used to produce it in its first year of installation.

"The minimum recycled content of our (pink) glass fibre insulation in Canada is 60 per cent," explains Nigel Ravenscroft of Owens Corning. "I don't have specifics for the source of the recycled glass we use, but it comprises post-industrial

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We all have a responsibility to preserve our environment and the communities that we live in

- Mark Cohen,
The Condo Store

and post-consumer waste from local sources like Toronto's grey box recycling program.

"Glass fibre insulation products produced at our Scarborough plant include much higher levels of recycled glass, 60 per cent is the minimum claimed. We supply building insulation for the Toronto market primarily from plants located in Toronto and Valleyfield, Que., which minimizes transportation emissions."

"Our rigid extruded-polystyrene insulation contains a minimum of 20 per cent recycled polystyrene," said Ravenscroft.

"Our compression packaging is the most efficient in the industry, which means you get more insulation on a delivery truck. The carbon

footprint in terms of transport is getting smaller every year."

WINDOWS

Most window glass used in Toronto buildings is manufactured using the recycle-friendly "float" process. It is sort of like making taffy. Silica sand and other materials (soda and lime) are melted over a hot bath of liquid tin. As part of the bake, 30 per cent or more recycled glass (cullet) is mixed in.

The big concern in using cullet is that impurities from the recycled glass could taint the finished product. However, savings to the environment and the bottom line make the use of clean cullet a North American standard for glass-makers.

STEEL

Toronto's skyline is built on steel. Without structural steel girders the condominium tower would never have been invented. As well, steel is used more and more for framing, roofing and decking on large scale condo projects.

Most Ontario steelmakers produce products cooked with up to 30 per cent recycled steel.

FLOORING

Nice new floors in your condo? Nice maybe but probably not 100 per cent new. Builders targeting areas within their projects where recycled materials can be effectively used need only look down.

The rubber undersides to carpeting often contain rubber that has been literally around again — recycled car tires are plentiful and cheap. Recycled tiles using everything from recycled wine bottle corks to reclaimed porcelain and clay are finding their way into condos.

At the Clear Spirit building in the Distillery District, century-old wood, harvested from one of the project's soon-to-be torn down rack houses (buildings where barrels of liquor were stored) is being converted into flooring.

Wood used to hold up barrels of booze is now lining the condo's lobby walls and the floors of suites.

"It is more a philosophical statement than a business decision,"

says Jamie Goad, one of the principals of the Distillery District.

"We are trying to promote the experience of living in the Distillery ... The Rack House has to come down so we are really glad we can save the wood."

New homeowners in Tridel's Renaissance of Richmond Hill (Major Mackenzie Dr. and Yonge St.) can upgrade flooring and wall coverings in their new units with tiles made from recycled leather.

"We have had an amazing response from architects who like the look and durability of our leather flooring (tiles and planks)," says Karen Deel, brand manager with Mississauga's Torlys Smart Floors.

"It is interesting that in terms of Canadian consumers, only a small portion are totally green. They are coming to our leather flooring for other reasons. The floor has a certain high-end style. There are health reasons, too; the floors do not emit VOCs (volatile organic compounds that affect air quality) and the cork underlay is also environmentally sensitive."

Christian Nadeau, a Montreal lawyer who now operates EcoDomo Recycled Leather Tiles in Maryland, is credited with launching the product in the United States.

EcoDomo works with Torlys in Canada and their tiles are used on floors, walls and elevator interiors.

"I get my cowhide leather in South America. Most of it comes from car-seat manufacturers. I buy up the leftovers, the leather that would normally end up in a landfill site," Nadeau says. "We tear the material into a fibre, blend with water, tree bark and latex, the product comes out 100-millimetres thick, and then is compressed to three-millimetre thickness."

THE BIG PICTURE

"This is just the beginning," says the Condo Store's Cohen. "We can expect a raising of the bar when it comes to using recycled materials."

"There is a desire among Toronto's condo builders to stay ahead of the pack, even on an international level. The industry here wants to use the latest in green technology and recycling initiatives."