

# New in Homes & Condos

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## CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

Colin and Justin offer their advice for the perfect last-minute holiday punch, **H8**



## LIST WEEK AT THE STAR

Product expert Vicky Sanderson picks her best new gizmos for 2009, **H8**

Top 10 home buying tips

Tarion.com

## BIRTH OF A CONDO PART 2: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

# Hanging on to heritage elements

Although Brampton council hopes Blade will spur a rebirth in its core, it wants parts of the old skate factory preserved

*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

David Eckler specializes in the redevelopment of heritage properties.

So when the principal of Architects Rasch Eckler Associates Ltd. was tasked with transforming Brampton's century-old former Dominion Skate factory into a gleaming new condo, he welcomed the opportunity.

After all, heritage buildings have a certain charm and design elements simply not found in modern structures.

"Industrial buildings of this era were built with a lot of architecture in mind, unlike factory buildings today," says Eckler, whose firm designed Blade in a joint venture with Sirlin Giller & Malek Architects.

The existing factory's architecture is "dramatic," he says, noting the stone insets, detailed arches, cornices and pilasters (or inset columns) that punch out from the brick facade.

The erstwhile skate factory has also provided designers with a strong theme to riff on: The project has been christened Blade.

"When I first heard the name, I thought it seemed a bit unusual," says co-architect Lawrence Malek. "But Blade has a nice ring to it. It's strong and contemporary, and it's also a historical reference."

Brampton city council voted unanimously in favour of Blade, a development that will consist of 350 units ranging from 570 to 1,500 square feet, including a dozen lofts.

Council hopes the project, being developed by Toronto-based Preston Group, will be a catalyst in its downtown revitalization efforts, attracting

BLADE continued on H7

## COUNTING THEIR

# BLESSINGS



ADRIEN VECZAN FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Home ownership became possible for Danny and Michelle Chow with daughter Ruby, 2, thanks to non-profit developer Options for Homes. Their 965-square-foot two-bedroom condo is also able to accommodate the wheelchair Danny needs because he suffers from Guillain-Barré Syndrome.

## Despite hardships, couple finds their daughter and condo home are reasons to celebrate

PAULA KULIG  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

At Ruby's house, the true spirit of Christmas doesn't come but once a year.

Like many other children, Ruby, almost 2, lives in a home filled with toys and family photos and decorations for the festive season. Yet, it's also a home with an abundance of love, commitment, generosity and hope in the midst of immense challenges — a place her parents, Danny and Michelle Chow, say has been a "blessing" for their young family.

Their story begins in 2000, when they met while working at an investment services firm

in Toronto. Before they were married, Danny lived in a series of overpriced apartments, while Michelle lived with her parents in Mississauga.

"Back at that time, we were in entry-level clerical jobs," says Michelle, 33, making home ownership in the city a distant dream.

Then in 2001, a friend brought a pamphlet to Danny's attention that outlined an affordable housing development, and the couple went to a public meeting at a North York library. The presentation was by Options for Homes, a non-profit developer that helps those with low and moderate incomes get into the housing

market. This particular building, the Shermount, was being built on Lawrence Ave. W. near Allen Rd., where Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. once had its headquarters.

Working with Options for Homes was a non-profit corporation called Home Ownership Alternatives, which provides financing to prospective homeowners in the form of second mortgages that don't have to be paid back until a property is sold — an approach that lowers the size of the first mortgage and increases the down payment to 25 per cent. At the

BLESSINGS continued on H6



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