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CO1 SATURDAY ON SA1V2

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SECTION CO ● TORONTO STAR

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2008

CONDOS

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5 Toronto Locations

CHRISTOPHER HUME
Yorkville has ability to reinvent itself
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Humidor is worth more than you'd think
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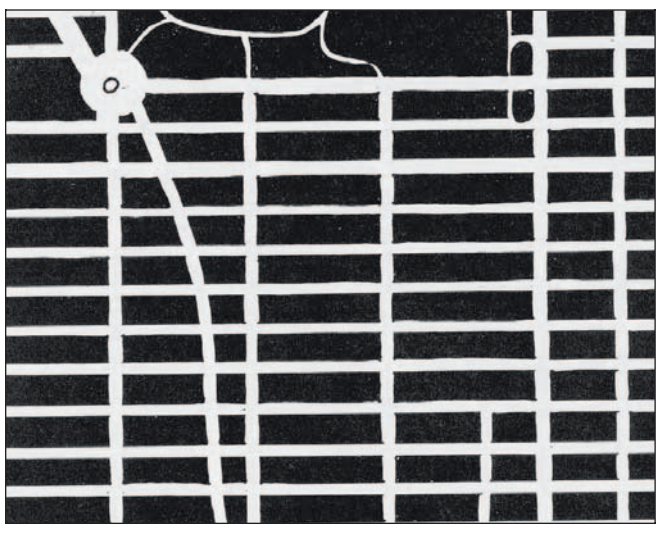
Because great cities have short blocks and lively sidewalks, Mississauga wants a downtown grid that lures pedestrians — and Amacon's Parkside Village will help launch the vision

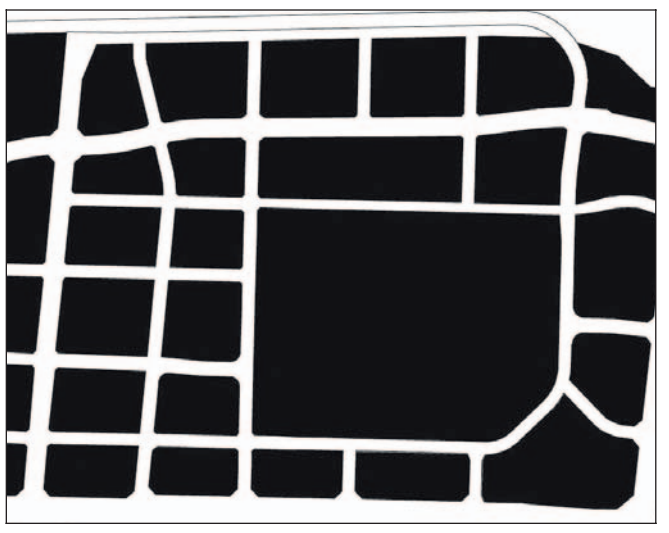
Barcelona: La Ramblas is the main north-south promenade.

Copenhagen: City features a car-free zone called the Stroget.

London: The Mayfair and Soho districts south of Oxford St.



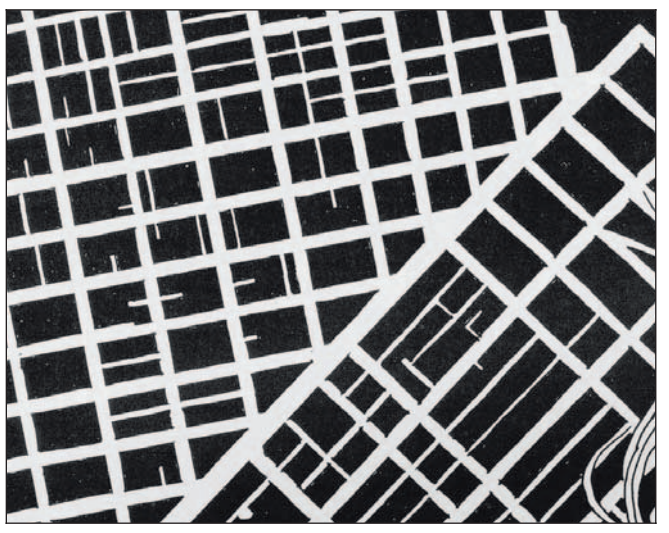
New York: Midtown Manhattan, south of Central Park.



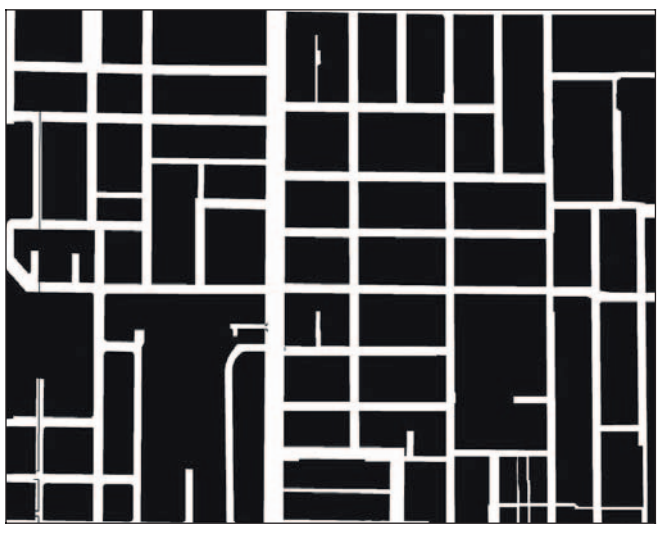
Mississauga: Long blocks and virtually empty sidewalks.

Paris: Streets were designed by Georges-Eugène Haussmann.

Rome: East of the Tiber River bend that points to the Vatican.



San Francisco: Market St. splits the central city into two grids.



Toronto: Between Queen and College Sts. east of Bathurst.

Beyond Density

DAN O'REILLY
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

For now, the vacant 12-hectare site just west of Mississauga's Civic Centre looks like most other potential development sites in suburbia — even if it is part of a downtown.

This spring, however, construction of Phase 1 of Mississauga's first "urban village" will begin, heralding a new era in the city centre's evolution.

In recent years, downtown Mississauga has amassed both significant density and a reasonably broad mix of land uses. But its sidewalks remain virtually empty, especially when compared with the attractive central areas of the world's great cities. And it's that lack of street life that Canada's sixth-largest city hopes to address starting with Parkside Village by Vancouver-based developer Amacon.

Just 30 years ago, the newly constructed Square One shopping complex and some vacant farmland was about all there was in this area. Now, this approximately 160-hectare, special-growth district in the Highway 403-Highway 10-Burnhamthorpe Rd. area really is the heart of Mississauga, says Ed Sajecki, the city's planning and building department commissioner.

A place that once provided little more than shopping and parking now has a fairly broad mix of uses.

MISSISSAUGA continued on **CO6**

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Mississauga wants life on its sidewalks

MISSISSAUGA from C01

Besides the Civic Centre, the Living Arts Centre, the central library and other facilities, it's now a prime office and residential area, with new retail and restaurants integrated into the taller buildings.

Parkside Village will add a lot more density and broaden the mix of uses. There will be about 5,300 highrise, midrise and townhouse units for about 12,000 people in an 11-block development west of Confederation Parkway, north of Burnhamthorpe. Amacon will also add restaurants, stores, banks, offices and a hotel to the mix, Sajecki says. What makes this development different is the attention being paid to the street grid as part of an effort to enhance street life in an area still dominated by the car.

> *Our blocks are too long; we know that*
>
> **ED SAJECKI**, MISSISSAUGA'S PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT COMMISSIONER

On one floor at the Civic Centre, there's a large Lego-style model that provides an overview of what the city centre will likely look like in 20 or 25 years. It allows the planning department to add miniature towers as it receives development applications, Sajecki says.

But the less noticeable things at street level may be at least as important to Mississauga's future. They include the planned construction of a new downtown park later this year, the redevelopment of two existing squares sometime in 2009, plus ongoing research into what other cities have accomplished.

Sajecki likes to say the "great cities have good bones," and he has put on presentations that include slides showing how central Mississauga's loose grid differs dramatically from the tight webs of streets common to cities where people like to walk.

"We're looking at what New York, Rome, Barcelona, Toronto, even Portland Ore., are doing," he says. "Our blocks are too long; we know that."

About 2½ years ago, the commissioner and some of his staff travelled to Vancouver to meet with that city's planning department. "Vancouver has a very high standard of urban design," Sajecki says.

Based partly on Vancouver's experience, Mississauga last year created an urban design review panel, made up of architects, landscape architects and planning professionals, to serve as an advisory committee to the city.

As part of the overall review process of the Parkside Village proposal, the Vancouver trip also provided the opportunity to examine the type of projects Amacon and other West Coast developers were doing.

Not only will Parkside Village be one of the largest developments in Mississauga by a single landowner, it will also be one of the densest. But while the scale is large, the amount of detailed planning into the pedestrian-oriented development will set the standards for future development proposals in the city centre, Sajecki says.

Under the "unlimited height and unlimited density" provisions of a secondary plan designed to stimulate the growth of the city centre in the 1990s, Amacon could have pushed ahead with a traditional development. But it chose not to go that route, says Marilyn Ball, the city's design and development director.

"They cut the blocks in half," she says, citing Amacon's decision to divide the development into manageable blocks, which will result in a more urban-style, compact street grid.

There will be nine development blocks and two designated park blocks, which will help form a corridor of green space linking the Mississauga Civic Centre with Zonta Meadows, a city park to the west of the development, she says.

The development blocks will be dotted with "point towers" of varying heights, which will serve as a buffer and transition area for a single-family subdivision, also to the west. Point towers are tall, slender buildings set back from the street on podiums, instead of the more traditional massive condominiums built at grade, Ball says.

"They're more pedestrian-friendly. As you walk by them on the street level, you're not as conscious of the tower."

Another hallmark of Parkside Village will be a "sophisticated mix of uses," including ground-floor retail shops, especially along Confederation Parkway, she says. Other examples of the intensive detailed planning include maintaining a 30-metre space between adjacent residential and commercial towers and the avoidance of blank walls or other "dead spots" at grade.

"The city didn't want areas where there is no life," explains Sal Vitiello, principal, E.I. Richmond Architects Ltd., the Toronto-based architects for the developer.

ANDREW WALLACE/TORONTO STAR

Lilliana Di Franco, left, Amacon's vice-president, marketing and sales, and Sal Vitiello, principal at E.I. Richmond Architects Ltd., check out the scale model of downtown Mississauga at the Civic Centre. The white blocks are buildings that are still in the works, including Amacon's Parkside Village.

TONY BOCK/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

This special-growth district really is the heart of Mississauga, says Ed Sajecki, above, the city's planning and building department commissioner.

Amacon has already established a strong presence in the city centre area with two fully occupied condo buildings, a third under construction and a fourth in the planning stages. But the inspiration for Parkside Village are the projects that Amacon and other West Coast firms have undertaken in Vancouver, Vitiello says.

"There is definitely a unique and recognizable approach to planning and urban design principles in Vancouver, and many of these West Coast approaches have been incorporated into the design. These include an emphasis on curb appeal, encouraging an active street life, the use of point-tower architecture and a focus on buildings at grade."

Almost five years of planning and negotiations with the city have been invested in the project. It was a process that encompassed countless meetings with city staff, recreating an original design and the hiring of Urban Strategies, a Toronto planning firm, to create the detailed design components. The result was an urban design document that serves as a guide for the planning principles.

Not only is Amacon the first developer in Mississauga to produce such a document, it's also the first to have its plans reviewed by the city's the new urban design review panel. The document will be incorporated into the development agreement, Vitiello says.

With its planned at-grade retail space on Confederation Parkway and partly along the internal side streets, Parkside Village won't be the type of condo development where residents simply come home at night and don't venture outside again until the following morning, says Lilliana Di Franco, Amacon's marketing and sales vice-president. "It will be true urban village with activity," says Di Franco, who helped create the original concept vision with Amacon president Marcello DeCotiis.

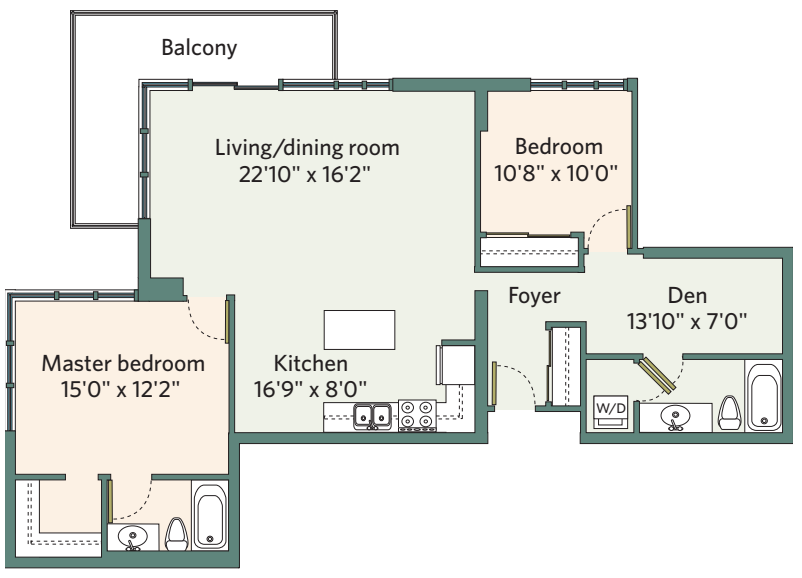
Sidewalks will be between 10 and 12 feet wide but at the corner of Princess Royal Dr. and Confederation Parkway, "the sidewalk will be approximately 30 feet in width to create a focal point and allow for café seating and an active street life and gathering point," she says.

Phase 1, with one 40-storey and two 36-storey condo towers, is scheduled to begin this spring.

Forgo pantry for counter space; turn den into storage

DONNA JEAN MACKINNON
TORONTO STAR

1,253 sq. ft.



After much soul searching, rather than a bungalow, Ken and his wife decided to buy a condominium for their retirement years.

Their 1,253 square-foot condo is yet to be built and Ken wonders about laying hardwood flooring throughout the suite.

Interior designer Dolores Pian advises installing pre-engineered wood everywhere including the foyer and kitchen.

"According to condo law, the floor can't be solid, but has to float, so it can be removed easily. Floating also helps reduce noise transfer," says Pian, owner of Spaces Custom Interiors.

Pian suggests punching up the foyer with dramatic artwork on the closet wall, as it will be the first thing seen. There's also room on the left for a tall mirror and a small bench.

Ken is considering the optional kitchen pantry, but Pian urges him to forgo it because he needs counter space more than a pantry.

She suggests building a narrower pantry against the bedroom wall. "This is an open plan so kitchen cabinetry should look like furniture and the pantry should be built to match the other cupboards," she says.

Pian recommends making the breakfast bar wider and crescent shaped, since more people can be fitted around a circle or crescent.

Because the living-dining room only has one short wall, it will be a challenge to furnish. Ken needs the one wall for a handsome wall unit that accommodates a TV, serves as an entertainment centre and has shelves for books and *objets d'art*.

Pian recommends a pair of 9-foot by 12-foot carpets to establish separate living and dining spaces. She would place a six-foot sofa and a pair of side (lamp) tables on the carpet and facing the wall unit. (Ken will have to run lamp cords under the rug to an outlet in the entertainment centre.) There's also room for an easy chair, with its back to the kitchen, a small wine table and a solid two-foot by four-foot coffee table.

Pian would position a parson's table, which can act as a server, against the back of the sofa.

A dining table for 10 is a must-have for the couple "We want to continue the tradition of having our family in for Sunday dinners," Ken writes.

Pian would go for a 42-inch by 72-inch oval table and chairs with elegant high backs. Pian advises keeping six chairs at the table and distributing four elsewhere.

Ken has a spot for a low buffet along the left bank of windows and there's room for a six-foot tree — one that makes an impact — in front of the column.

Because this condo is sadly lacking in storage, Pian advises turning the den into a storage room. She strongly urges Ken to hire a designer to customize a series of closets and cupboards.

Ken indicates he is reserving the second bedroom for his two grandchildren. The narrow room will just accommodate twin beds and one chest, according to Pian.

The master bedroom has too much window — in fact, so does the living room. Pian warns that blinds, blackout curtains for the southeast bedrooms and classy living room drapery is bound to be a major expense.

If Ken and his wife want a "wow" factor in the master bedroom, Pian suggests investing in an elaborate headboard and placing it against the kitchen wall.

"I'd put a comfortable swivel chair to the right of the column for reading and so this couple can enjoy different views throughout the day," she says.

Pian describes the balcony as an extension of the living room. Because it is always visible, Pian advises consulting with a landscape architect to design an outdoor "park."

If you have a plan, send it to Best-laid Plans, Condo Living, Toronto Star, 1 Yonge St., Toronto M5E 1E6. No email submissions. Designers wanting to take part can contact condos@thestar.ca.

Donna Jean MacKinnon is a Star reporter whose Best-Laid Plans feature appears Saturdays.