



ART DECO GEM
Music box plays
Hoagy's 'Stardust'
PAGE C05

yourHome.ca
YOUR ONLINE SOURCE

ANIMAL FARM
Buddy finds a loving
home in Newmarket
PAGE C03



COLLEGE PARK

The rebirth of a Depression-era dream



An artist's rendering shows Eaton's original plan in the 1920s for a tower at College and Yonge Sts. The Aura condo tower will rise 75 storeys — or 245 metres — when it is completed.

On a block once meant to be Toronot's retail
epicentre, a 75-storey condo is poised to rise

STEPHEN WEIR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

College Park is on the upswing of a roller-coaster ride of boom, bust and boom all over again. A revitalized Eaton's College Park building, with its iconic, five-star Carlu Hall, has reignited an economic fascination for one of downtown Toronto's most prestigious and historic blocks, bounded by College, Gerrard, Bay and Yonge Sts. Canderel Stoneridge is poised to begin construction of Aura, a 75-storey condominium tower just south of College Park at the corner of Yonge and Gerrard. The residential skyscraper will cover the last street level parking lot along Yonge St. downtown. It will create a vertical community of close to 3,000 people on a block that was once supposed to be the retail epicentre of Canada. The British Empire is now a dusty

memory, but an 80-year-old architectural dream for a classier, bigger and higher College Park still lingers. Aura will be one of the tallest residential buildings in the Commonwealth of Nations and will almost fulfill a corporate dream made by the Eaton family business during the Depression. When the sod for the limestone and granite College Park store was turned back in 1928, Eaton had grandiose plans to construct the tallest building in the Empire, says Toronto historian, author and broadcaster Mike Filey. The lower levels would become the retail flagship of Eaton's department store chain and the upper floors would become both corporate headquarters and rental office space. Before the stately skyscraper could become a reality, the plans were drastically slashed from 36

AURA continued on C06



Prices from the \$300,000's

A FEW SELECTED SUITES REMAINING
waterparkcity.ca 416.203.3700

Prices from the \$300,000's

A FEW SELECTED SUITES REMAINING
buranocondos.com 416.968.1010

Prices from the \$300,000's

A FEW SELECTED SUITES REMAINING
onebedford.com 416.962.6639

Prices from the \$300,000's

COMING SOON REGISTER AT
icecondos.com

Renderings are artist's concept. Prices and specifications are subject to change without notice. E.&O.E.



CONDOS > COVER STORY

City opposition finally pays off

AURA from C01

floors to just seven. The dream of international greatness for the College Park Block was put on hold.

"I believe, among other things, the designers (the same firm that designed the Royal York and Maple Leaf Gardens) ran into water problems on site. And while they dealt with that and the economic downturn caused by the Depression, the city's downtown business leapfrogged from Queen right over College to Bloor," explained Filey. "Bloor and Yonge became one of the important intersections. However, College Park was still a terrific building and store. Carriage trade, for sure."

The seven-storey limestone and granite Eaton emporium, complete with a looming street-level Roman style archway, wasn't noteworthy by British Empire standards, but was a bold retail statement for the Dominion. With its indoor art deco shopping concourse and an exquisite seventh floor Round Room restaurant and auditorium, the store catered to the rich and famous without forgetting the needs of the common folk.

It was the first real carriage trade super store for Hogtown's hoi polloi. Fine furniture ("the largest furniture and house furnishings store in the British Empire") was its stock-in-trade. There was also an art gallery that regularly exhibited Group of Seven painter Frank Johnston. Dinner in the banana yellow seventh floor Round Room — formal dinner wear, please — before attending a Leafs game down the street, was the real Hockey Night in Canada. Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, the National Ballet of Canada and Glenn Gould all performed in the auditorium.

In 1977, two doors close, one big set of glass doors opens. The 56,000-square-metre Eaton College St. store and the Eaton store at Queen and Yonge Sts. were shut down with the coming of the Toronto Eaton Centre. College St. was converted into a warren of street level, small high-end boutiques. Most of the upper levels, excluding the now-empty auditorium, were converted into apartment units and provincial court facilities.

Six years after the close of the College St. Eaton store, a decidedly not art deco-style building was cleaved onto the west side of the building — 777 Bay St., a 30-storey sterile glass and steel office tower best known for housing a Haida totem pole — Three Watchmen — carved by Haida artist Robert Davidson.

Once the headquarters for *Maclean's* maga-

zine and the Maclean-Hunter publishing company, the building's office floors are now leased by the province. About 65 per cent of the building houses government activities.

While all this business brought thousands of people daily through the building's subway station, that traffic did little to halt the building's slide into a land of fast food, coffee emporiums, magazine stands and dry cleaning dropoffs. Today, the biggest retail tenants at College Park and 777 Bay are Winners, Metro (formerly Dominion) and Dollarama.

There is also a bank of criminal and youth provincial courts, holding cells and probation offices installed in the upper floors of the old Eaton's store, making the decline of high-end shopping complete.

However, the winds of change are blowing hard. Very few empty spots can be found on the retail levels of the block buildings. A row of 10 multi-storey townhouses now line the west side of the Barbara Ann Scott Park and ice rink that is right outside the back door of the old Eaton store.

Two new tall condos — The Residences of College Park — have been built on the west end of the block and are now linked by tunnel to the retail malls and subway station. The Liberties, a 20-storey L-shaped condominium complex at the southwest corner of Bay and Gerrard, completes the block.

For a brief moment in time, the 51-storey Residences of College Park was the highest — based on floors — condominium in the city. That has been eclipsed by the 54-storey Min-to North Tower on Yonge St., and over the next five years will be dwarfed by its own 75-storey Aura condominium.

"I think what really held the rebirth of College Park back," said Kyle Rae, the city councillor for the ward, "was the reluctance of the caretakers of the building to preserve and restore the iconic seventh floor. They wanted to gut it and turn it into offices (for the Toronto Dominion bank). We wouldn't let that happen."

As a result of city opposition, that floor sat empty for 25 years. They (Toronto College Street Centre Ltd., controlled by London Life Insurance) found themselves at odds with the city. Great West Life (GWL) bought London Life in 1997 and made a commitment to restore what was a badly damaged and neglected historic site. The city, in return, supported GWL's bid to build two huge condos on Bay St.

"Yes, we put a gun to their heads, but look at

Continued on next page

MILTON'S CONDO SELL-SATIONAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Our Sales Office is moving. All remaining suites must be sold.

FREE!

INCLUDED IN YOUR SUITE

- Granite Countertops
- Hardwood floors in living & dining rooms
- 5 Quality Appliances
- Upgraded 40 oz. carpet
- (3 in Stainless Steel)
- Upgraded door hardware

To celebrate your purchase, enjoy a SELL-SATIONAL dinner for two at one of Milton's finest restaurants**

**2 BEDROOMS
2 BATHS
Condos from**

\$240,500*

**FREE
CONDO
FEES
FOR ONE
YEAR**

**ENTER
TO WIN
A 42"
SAMSUNG
PLASMA
TV**

* SUBJECT TO PRIOR SALE
** DINNER VOUCHER
VALUED AT \$100

CALL NOW 905-864-0509
valeryhomes.com

FEEL RIGHT AT HOME

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 1PM TO 5 PM
OR BY APPOINTMENT



Purchase between now
and Dec. 15, 2008 and receive
3yrs @ 4.0% or
5yrs @ 4.5%
Closing no later than June 15, 2009

2008 Ontario Home Builders' Association Award of Distinction for Most Outstanding Attached Multi-Unit Home

Bloor Village

NOW OCCUPYING 80% already sold.

Own your 3 Bedroom + Den award winning,
luxury home starting at 1,900 sq.ft.

from **\$1,839.00** a month*

*See a Dunpar representative for complete details.

Visit our model suite located at Bering Ave., West of Islington, just south of Bloor.

Monday - Friday 2-7pm & Weekends 1-5pm

Park View Trail

AVAILABLE FALL 2009

Own your 2 Bedroom + Den award winning,
luxury home starting at 1,450 sq.ft.

from **\$1,531.00** a month*

*See a Dunpar representative for complete details.

Visit our model suite at Islington Village, N.E. corner of Islington & Evans Ave.

Monday - Thursday 2-7pm & Weekends 1-5pm

Prices subject to change without notice. E. & O.E.

416.253.5888 • www.dunparhomes.com **dunpar** better by design™



ON



Aura's modern amenities and postcard views will attract people who want to live in tall buildings and enjoy the convenience of the subway access.

Continued from previous page

what has been achieved," said Rae. "The Carlu is the linchpin for the rebirth of College Park."

In the summer of 2001, Toronto entrepreneurs Jeffrey Roick and Mark Robert leased the seventh floor and began what they called the highest profile heritage restoration in Canada. A year and a half, later the Carlu — named after its famed designer, French architect Jacques Carlu — was reborn. The banquet facility and auditorium now look exactly as they did in the glory years, except that they are updated with 21st century technology.

The Carlu is in constant demand for five-star wedding receptions, private parties, fundraisers and most recently, rocker Bryan Adams (he performed two unplugged concerts in September).

"This was not a Disneyland-style reconstruction, this was the real thing," explained Mark Robert. "Yes, we are pioneers, but there is a real opportunity here and our success has validated that. We show, every night, that people will spend the big dollars to be here. People are even willing to ride the subway in black tie."

"It is fabulous, the city is so gung-ho," continued the Carlu's managing partner. "This is now a 24/7 community where people live and work. There is a greater presence of police — their headquarters are across the street — making it very safe. And having a dedicated elevator service directly to our floor separates us (from the courts and its clientele)."

The challenge for the Aura architects is to make sure that their super-sized condo does not completely overshadow the Carlu — the very building that is attracting buyers to the block.

"The Aura will respect the lines of the Eaton building. The podium matches the height lines of the old building. It is an art deco treasure. We cannot mimic it, our design refines it," said Berardo Graziani of Graziani + Corazza Architects.

Aura will be massive. Its builders will be pouring concrete for the next few years as it goes up 75 storeys (including a four-storey podium). There will be a large retail operation in the podium, above and below the street. An underground mall will link Aura with College Park and the subway.

Eventually all of the buildings on the College Block will be linked to the city's underground "Path" network. There will be no surface level parking around the Aura. With entrances off Bay and Gerrard Sts. a massive garage and loading dock will connect the condo with College Park, 777 Bay St. and the two other Canderel Stoneridge-built towers. The building plans have gone through many changes to answer the concerns of the community.

With close to 1,000 condo units, Aura will have the population of a town the size of Lakefield. Unlike most of the other new condos being built below Bloor St., this building may well need childcare facilities. Aura has a number of family-sized 2½- and three-bedroom suites. "When we first looked at the College Park Block, we realized that nothing focused on this beautiful inner city park. There was no edge to it, only back doors," explained Graziani.

"When we designed Phase 1 and 2 (The Residences of College Park) we decided that there should be eyes on the park. The condos that were constructed look directly down into the park. As well, we put in a row of townhouses with front doors that open onto the grass."

"Aura will have a two-storey lobby — a high wall of curtain glass — that opens right onto the park," he continued. "there will be public space inside, the art that will be hung will look more like a gallery than a lobby. It will animate the edge of the

park. To have this amount of space is invigorating. Canderel Stoneridge from the start has wanted to fix up this open space, especially in how people come into the park."

The Mississauga-based architect says that right now, most people are unaware of the park. That is because Yonge St. pedestrians must cut through a parking lot, or nip out the back door of the College Park buildings, to reach the well-groomed green space.

Back in the day, there used to be Hayter St., an east/west roadway between College and Gerrard Sts. Once Aura is built, Hayter will return, albeit as a mall, giving pedes-

trian access to the park, the stores and the skyscraper.

"People love to live in tall buildings, especially tall buildings over-top subways, that is the new way," said Riz Dhanji, Canderel Stoneridge's vice-president of sales and marketing. "At the Aura you can walk to the subway, to work, to school or use your bike (Aura will have 200 bike racks). With a direct link to College Park and its Dominion store, people won't have to go outside."

"We will have a landscaped rooftop (patio) on the fifth floor, and top-notch recreational facilities," he continued. "What people are

looking for is convenience, and we will have a combined 180,000 square feet of retail space available for the right set of tenants." All of the stores, boutiques and restaurants will have floor-to-ceiling windows, facing onto Yonge St.

When will the big hole begin to get dug? The answer, like the multi-million-dollar suites that will populate the upper floors of the Aura, is up in the air. A construction start is dependent on the overall sales of the condo units (they range in price from \$500,000 to \$17.5 million).

"We are very close to that point," said Dhanji. "We have sold approximately 75 per cent. Once another 5

to 10 per cent have moved we can begin. We are (also) waiting on the necessary approvals from the city, TTC and other stakeholders in order to get started, which we anticipate will happen in the spring."

It will take years to construct the 245-metre Aura. Just as the Eaton company dreamed, when Aura is finished, the College Park block will be one of the tallest residential towers in the Commonwealth — but not for long. Already, there are two condo towers in Australia that break the tape measure, and more tall town-sized towers are planned for Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and England.



WHAT IS FLYSTYLE?

IT'S BEING ABLE TO WORKOUT AT A GEORGE CHAKER-DESIGNED DIESEL-STYLE GYM WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR BUILDING. IT'S BEING ABLE TO ENTERTAIN IN A BAR/LOUNGE/DINING ROOM SO COOL IT WILL MAKE YOUR SPINE TINGLE. IT'S LIVING NEXT TO THE MOST HISTORIC SQUARE IN THE CITY — AND NOT BEING THE LEAST BIT SQUARE.

IT'S ABOUT BEING MOMENTS AWAY FROM EVERYTHING THAT MAKES TORONTO LIFE SO IRRESISTIBLE — THE BARS, CAFÉS, CLUBS, CINEMAS, THEATRES AND PRO-SPORTS VENUES. FINALLY, IT'S ABOUT EMBRACING YOUR INNER FLY.

FRONT STREET'S ULTIMATE NEW ADDRESS ACROSS FROM THE ROGERS CENTRE AND CN TOWER.

REGISTER TODAY FOR YOUR PRIORITY PREVIEW AT: FLYCONDOS.COM OR CALL 1.888.765.7338



Brokers Protected. Prices & specifications are subject to change without notice. Rendering is artist's concept. E.&O.E.

