



HOMES & CONDOS

BIRTH OF A CONDO: PART IV SALES

Blade: a case of sharp marketing

Pent-up demand, location, great amenities and affordability are factors in sizzling sales

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

Debbie Cosic and Mira Tomljenovic, the partners behind In2ition Realty, know a thing or two about selling condos.

In a number of ways, though, their latest project, Blade in Brampton, could almost sell itself.

It has what Cosic calls a “winner location,” smack dab in the heart of the city centre, directly across the street from a GO Transit station.

What’s more, she says, Blade will boast “great architecture” — a gleaming 26-storey condo with the century-old former Dominion Skate factory forming its base.

(To play on the skate theme, Blade’s courtyard will feature a skating oval that converts to a walking track in the summer.)

“Anything that’s sexy enough that you can actually describe it on the sales floor makes the job so much easier,” says Tomljenovic.

It doesn’t hurt that there’s plenty of pent-up demand for this kind of development in Brampton, a city long underserved in the highrise condo department.

“Brampton was waiting for a condo of this calibre,” Cosic says.

Blade, which is being developed by the Toronto-based Preston Group, will consist of 349 units, including a dozen lofts and 12 penthouses on the top two floors.

Brampton council, which voted unanimously in favour of the project, hopes it will spur a revitalization of its downtown core, attracting new businesses and residents.

And while the project has elicited plenty of interest, it is essential nonetheless that the sales strategy be carefully plotted and executed, Cosic says.

“There are a whole bunch of ingredients that have to fall into place. If you miss any of those elements, the building won’t be a success.”

MULTI-LEVEL SALES STRATEGY

The sales strategy for Blade came together after In2ition conducted months of research on the Brampton market.

“We had a pretty large team intensively study the marketplace,” Cosic says. “That ultimately helped us with the positioning of the development.”

In2ition took note of relevant local demographics, including age, gender mix, average salaries and the city’s predominant ethnicities.

Given Blade’s proximity to the GO Transit station, the team also surveyed transit riders: How old are they? How frequently do they travel by train? Are they married or sin-



Mira Tomljenovic, left, and Debbie Cosic of In2ition Marketing celebrate the grand opening of Blade, a new condominium project in downtown Brampton.

BLADE AT A GLANCE

Location: 45 Railroad St., Brampton

Developer: The Preston Group

Units: 349 (one-bedroom, one-bedroom plus den, two-bedroom and lofts)

Size range: 571 to 1,500 square feet

Prices: from \$179,900 to over \$400,000 for lofts

Estimated completion date: 2012

Amenities: GO Transit/Via Rail station, Highways 407 and 410, Rose Theatre, Gage Park, YMCA, library.

Web: www.bladecondos.com

gle? And do they have kids?

What did all the research tell them?

Brampton is a “surprisingly broad-based market,” Cosic says. “People think that Brampton has certain ethnicities that stand out.

“And while there is a sizeable South Asian community, we also found that the downtown was primarily made up of residents who had lived there a long time.

“These were old Bramptonites who wanted to stay in Brampton,” adds Tomljenovic. “And their kids wanted to stay there, too. They like the quality of life, the affordability and the proximity to public transport — it’s 22 minutes from... Blade to Union Station.”

Armed with a solid understanding of the local market, In2ition set about creating what Cosic describes as a “multi-level” sales strategy for Blade.

Part of this has involved putting on a series of sales events.

There have been several sneak previews for local brokers and a “priority preview” last November for those who had preregistered to receive information.

Other events have catered to the target markets that In2ition identified through its research.

For example, they’ve held events for various local ethnic groups — including Polish and Portuguese nights — and ones for certain demographic groups, such as “zoomers” (baby boomers who seek an active retirement) and Property Divas, a Toronto-based group, run by Tomljenovic, for women who want to invest in real estate.

The overall idea with these events, Cosic explains, is to avoid putting all the eggs in one basket, sales wise.

“Instead of targeting just one group, we’re targeting a series of them,” she says. “That makes it easier for us to get where we want to be in terms of sales.”

TARGET MARKETS

Before the sales process began, In2ition worked with the Blade architects and the developer to determine the ideal size and layout of the suites.

“The onus is on us to come up with the right blueprint for this,” Cosic says. “Because if we get it wrong, we can’t sell it.”

Blade will offer a mix of unit layouts — one bedroom, one bedroom-plus-den, two bedrooms and lofts — that range from 571 square feet to 1,500-square-foot lofts. The penthouses will be 1,200 square feet.

Cosic says it was imperative that a fair number of smaller suites were included, in an effort to appeal to the GO train commuters.

ABOUT IN2ITION

Debbie Cosic and Mira Tomljenovic launched Mississauga-based In2ition Realty in 2007.

It is a sister company of Sutton Group Signature Realty, a brokerage Cosic founded with Tomljenovic seven years ago and has grown to include 72 agents.

In2ition specializes in the re-launching of once faltering high-rise developments, such as Evolution (Etobicoke), Fiesta (North York), Holiday Towers (Toronto) and The Intowns (Kitchener).

The company markets and sells new projects, as well.

It has over a dozen highrise developments and 11 lowrise developments on its roster, including Blade, The Address at High Park (Toronto), The Manors of Gordon Woods (Mississauga) and Gates of Eden (Etobicoke).

The feather in its cap is Amac’s Parkside Village in Mississauga, the single largest housing development in the western GTA, Cosic says. In2ition also does business around the world.

For more information: www.in2ition.ca

— Ryan Starr

“These are young professionals who are working in downtown Toronto and would love to have that downtown urban lifestyle but they just can’t afford it.”

In2ition’s market research also factored in what amenities to include at Blade. East- and west-facing units will have larger balconies than the north- and south-facing condos, for example.

“We focused on the east to appeal to our South Asian market segment, because it’s facing Mecca,” Cosic explains. “And west, because of the spectacular views of the Niagara Escarpment.”

The preferences of the target markets also were incorporated in the design of Blade’s 10th floor amenity level, which will include an exercise room, indoor pool, yoga room, Zen lounge and an outdoor terrace with kitchen and alfresco dining area.

“People told us they wanted to enjoy outdoor living despite the fact they were in a condo,” Cosic says.

In2ition also took the lead role in determining pricing for Blade. They set a price per square foot, factoring in what local competitors were selling product for, and added premiums for height, views and extras like larger balconies.

Prices for what is currently on sale range from \$179,900 for the 571-square-foot units to \$356,900 for 947-square-foot suites. The lofts, when released, will be around \$400,000.

Pricing a condo appropriately is a fine science, Cosic says.

“If you saw the amount of research and strategy and mathematical equations we use, it’s just incredible. Builders give us an end number; where they want to be with the building; the kind of profit they want to make. Then we work to deliver that.”

Still, the process is often a battle, she admits. “Usually we like to start with sharper pricing than the developer wants us to.”

TRASH TALK

Not your average food processor

ELLEN MOORHOUSE

SPECIAL TO THE STAR

So you live in an apartment or condo without a green bin program and you feel guilty about throwing out those soil-nourishing kitchen scraps.

Perhaps you’re looking for an easy, critter-free composting system since your backyard bin took in lodgers, and you don’t feel like boarding a colony of red wiggler worms, no matter how marvellous their digestive tracks.

West-end condo resident Holly Humphrey has found the solution.

Just over a month ago, she received her new NatureMill indoor composter, ordered over the Internet from the San Francisco-based company (www.naturemill.com).

“I’ve had it for about five weeks and love it,” Humphrey reports in an email. “We don’t throw out any organic waste now and are accumulating compost for the building’s gardens or for family and friends

who garden.”

The NatureMill composter, according to the website, can process 55 kilos a month of organic waste, including meat, dairy leftovers even pet waste. Hard or fibrous items such as bones or corn cobs and husks are not recommended.

The computerized device, made out of recycled polypropylene plastic, has the shape of a paper shredder, measuring 50 centimetres (20 inches) high, 50 centimetres deep and 30 centimetres (12 inches) wide. It can fit under a kitchen counter (cabinet kits are available). The website suggests it consumes the same amount of electricity as a night light.

Humphrey paid \$299 (U.S.) plus \$80 (U.S.) for shipping the 7.7-kilo (17-pound) unit. It arrived in about a week, she says.

The organics go into the top mixing chamber, where it’s turned, aerated, and kept at an ideal temperature and moisture level. A charcoal

air filter controls odour. As the material decomposes, it drops to a lower tray, where it continues to cure. In about two weeks, you can remove your compost — a red light indicates it’s ready.

Owners add baking soda to neutralize acidity and add “brown” carbon-rich material, such as pellet fuel or sawdust, to balance out the nitrogen-rich kitchen scraps and keep the microbes happy.

Humphrey drove all the way to a Home Depot in Whitby to buy a supply of pellets (\$11.40 for 36 kilos, a two-year supply); Rona stores also have wood pellets in stock.

Meanwhile, Humphrey, who has herbs on her balcony in warmer weather, might just expand her horticultural horizons a bit with her steady supply of good, clean, homemade compost.

MORE ON WINTER COMPOSTING

After the column on how Jeanette Dunke and Ben Collings continue

composting all winter long in a garbage can sheltered in their Fergus garage, Cathy Smith wrote to ask if the garage was heated.

No it isn’t, says Dunke. However, they have insulated the outer walls and garage door and plan to insulate the ceiling. The compost freezes slightly, Dunke reports, when it’s -15C outside. They have wrapped insulation around the garbage can containing their compost, but haven’t bothered this mild winter.

Smith says she and her husband accumulate their kitchen scraps in plastic 18-litre wine juice pails in their garage and dump the contents in the outdoor composters come spring. By summer’s end, the compost is ready.

FOR PEAT’S SAKE

J. Wilson urges Dunke and Collings to use renewable coconut coir instead of peat moss as a carbon source for their winter composting. There’s concern about mining peat



NatureMill indoor composter turns soil-nourishing kitchen scraps into compost in about two weeks.

bogs, which are carbon sinks and the impact on eco systems, drainage and water quality.

Wilson, who keeps a three-tiered worm chalet from Bradford-based Cathy’s Crawly Composters (cathyscomposters.com) in her basement, says she supplements the wigglers’ diet with coffee grounds from Starbucks.

Trash Talk appears Saturdays in New in Homes & Condos. Send questions or comments to e_moorhouse@sympatico.ca.