

TOTAL PACKAGE

Live, work and play in Mississauga's new urban village

■ *By Erin Rankin*

STANDING IN A downpour may not be at the top of most people's fun list. But for urban hipsters looking to set down roots, young families looking for a place their children can run and play, and investors looking for great opportunities, there was little choice but to let the rain run down your back if you wanted a piece of Parkside.

And talking about laughing in the rain, Amacon found itself in the enviable position of releasing more product ahead of schedule. This summer's preview opportunities for VIP registrants, brokers, friends and family of the builder, its contractors and consultant resulted in impressive sales. The first tower, The Residences at Parkside Village, was 90 per cent sold while the Grand Residence was 35 per cent sold by the end of July.

"The incredible success of Parkside Village, well ahead of any grand opening, is a reflection of the high demand for the 905 area and the innovative design of this urban village," said Debbie Cosic, principal of In2ition Realty, the exclusive brokerage for Parkside Village. "With Parkside Village, Amacon is creating a microcosm of the ideal urban neighbourhood."

Amacon—a developer with a self-described passion for creating communities where people can truly, live, work and play, is shaking things up with their landmark, 30-acre, 11-block master-planned Parkside Village in the heart of Mississauga.

"Parkside Village will redefine the future face of downtown Mississauga," said Liliana Di Franco, Amacon's vice president of marketing and sales. "It

Public interest in Parkside Village has been strong. *Photos courtesy In2ition*

MISSISSAUGA'S ONLY
URBAN VILLAGE



serves not only as a gateway to a fabulous new lifestyle for our purchasers, but it represents the genesis of a revitalized city centre. Once developed, it will also establish the GTA's first true urban village. Inside or out, this represents something new and exciting."

URBAN FACTORS

With the spike in the real estate boom starting in the mid-1990s, Canadians jumped in their car and simply drove for affordable housing. Realtors called this phenomena "driving 'til you qualify." As Canadians drove longer and longer distances (the average Canadian commute by 2005 was 63 minutes a



The Parkside Village team

day), cities spread quickly. At the root of it all was cheap gas. But as much as it hurts, most economic forecasts suggest paying a-buck-thirty at the pumps may soon be remembered as fondly as the lost days of paying 70 cents. Analysts such as CIBC's Jeff Rubin are now routinely quoted by media saying the days of \$200-per-barrel oil are not far off.

So, is pricey gas going to herald an exodus from suburbs to the city? Social geographer Richard Harris thinks so. He's been quoted in the *National Post* saying, "nothing is going to happen overnight, but the spike in price is bound to encourage higher densities." Of course the people who left in the first place to chase their dream of home ownership may still be a quandary. Enter Amacon's Parkside Village, where residents can live, work and play in one area and become less car-dependent.

VISIONING A RENAISSANCE

With a burgeoning population and a dwindling land supply, Mississauga is car-centric. And, like most suburban municipalities, Mississauga feels the pressure of delivering municipal services over a large area. In visioning documents, including the city's strategic plan, the priority is clear: lessen car-dependency. But that in itself has been a challenge.

With decades of experience, Amacon has a portfolio of landmark developments in Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton and Los Angeles and has a highly regarded reputation for setting new standards. It is a leader in real estate development, construction and property management across Canada, whose developments earn



An exterior rendering shows how Parkside Village will redefine downtown Mississauga.

< Parkside Particulars >

Parkside Village is a 30-acre master-planned, large-scale, mixed-use residential community.

Builder: Amacon

Location: City Centre, Mississauga at Confederation and Burnhamthorpe Roads

Size: approximately 5,300 units located in 40 buildings

Density: about 12,000 people in an 11-block area

Outstanding feature: Fully assembled integrated urban village reminiscent of Old Montreal, tailored to purchasers who want to live, work and play in the same community; unique in the GTA.

Time Horizon: 7 to 10 years

Prices: starting \$189,900 to mid-\$389,900s

Purchasers: First and second time homebuyers, some families and investors

Development highlights: Clever street designs and patterns with wide sidewalks, thoughtful architectural detailing, sensitive scale and purposeful materials to encourage an animated, pedestrian friendly street-level experience. Easy access to new and existing amenities including stores, restaurants, theatres and a three-acre park.

Current releases: 36-storey Residences at Parkside Village and sister tower, the 45-storey Grand Residences

Design Features: One- to two-bedroom plus den suites with 9-foot ceilings wide-plank hardwood flooring, granite kitchen counter tops and access to a 50,000 square-foot amenity facility that includes a pooch patio, wine cellar, green arcade and a film screening room.

Design-feel: Old Montreal with wide sidewalks, stores and restaurants, a recreation centre with a music stage, a wine cellar, a film screening room, green arcade, kids playground, pool, gaming lounge and fitness studio.

Development Team: Liliana L. Di Franco, Amacon; Debbie Cosic and Mira Tomljenovic, In2ition Realty; Danny Roth and El Richmond Architects; Pino Di Mascio, Urban Strategies; Alex Chapman and Kelly Gray, Chapman Design Group; Robert Galletta, Fly Agency.

exceptional long-term value. And, it was just the kind of developer the City of Mississauga was hoping might come knocking on its door.

“Mississauga has anticipated such a development as Amacon’s,” said Michael Karowich of the city’s design division. “One that would provide the much needed density and critical mass to support a truly urbane centre, complete with urban lifestyles, places of work, nightlife, gritty vibrancy and spontaneity...that are evident in any city with a strong urban character and imagery.”

For Amacon, its vision for Parkside Village started back in 2001. Behind it all was the builder’s passion for innovation, blazing a trail and creating developments that matter. From the outset, creating an urban village that had all the design perfections of established urban areas like Old Montreal and Toronto’s chic Bloor West Village was the driving force. DiFranco said Amacon is undertaking nothing less than a complete paradigm shift in the city’s core; one that will change the way planners, politicians and residents view community.

“By pursuing the development of a true urban village—one that offers the best features of an urban environment, including walkability, mixed uses, green spaces, social diversity, a good balance between the pedestrian experience and the needs of the car owner, plus transit options, strong design elements in the pursuit of intensification—Parkside Village is a bold new vision for downtown Mississauga.

“Parkside offers a truly unique experience. You can leave the car at home and stroll to your favourite café or restaurant. At your doorstep is the Living Arts Centre, an array of shops and over three acres of parkland, all part of Parkside Village,” added Di Franco.

BRICKS AND MORTAR: AN URBAN VILLAGE COMES TO 905

Chris Rouse, city planner, puts the Parkside development into perspective with one word: massive. With a 7 to 10 year timeline to final completion, Rouse said it’s certainly the largest mixed-use development undertaken in Mississauga and probably in Canada to date. With a push to intensify and spur the growth of Mississauga’s core, politicians agreed to remove restrictive zoning by-laws and take limitations off both residential and commercial development. Significantly, there is no height restriction, allowing developers to intensify and build up. By also restricting the number of allowable parking spaces to just one per unit, Mississauga is intentionally trying to bring a certain gravity to the core—a feel previously found in big cities like Toronto and Vancouver.

While condo development isn’t new to Mississauga, large-scale integrated mixed-use developments are. One significant plus, said Rouse, was the amount of open space available to developers. Amacon saw the potential early in 2001 and moved to buy 30-acres of farmland—a blank canvas that would become Parkside Village.

“To make our vision a reality,” said Di Franco, “it was essential to build a team with the breadth of expertise and shared passion to create a true urban village. We have worked as a team with our urban planners, architects, landscape architects, interior designers, environmental engineers, and of course the highly qualified staff of the City of

Mississauga. Without this collaborative effort by all the members of the team, Parkside Village could not become a reality.”

Upon completion, the Parkside Village development will feature nearly 40 buildings—15 of them high-rise towers—with a total of about 6,000 units and approximately 12,000 residents. The development will also feature three acres of parkland as well as landscaped pedestrian streetscapes and a mix of residential and commercial space.

To create a truly urban feel, Amacon moved away from slab development to tower development. By using podiums that are to scale, Rouse said the city’s planning department was particularly impressed with the balance Amacon was able to achieve. “The podiums are critical because they must be high enough to give a main-street feel but not so big as to become towering.”

Other outstanding features include the scale and size of blocks, the quality of architecture and the differentiation between lots while maintaining a design theme throughout. To achieve success and bring the 416-feel to Mississauga, Rouse said he credits the professionalism of Amacon.

“They are extremely easy to work with. Before they even started they handed us a document that laid their vision out. Throughout the process they would come up with a concept, turn it over to us and let us come back with our ideas on how it would fit in the overall city vision. The result, in the end, it is a much better quality of development,” he said.

MARKETING TO A NEW GENERATION

Most marketing gurus agree that selling to today’s design savvy clientele requires a sophisticated holistic approach that markets lifestyle. By creating a master-planned, mixed-use community, there is little argument that Amacon’s Parkside Village takes this concept to a whole new level.

“At Parkside Village we are attracting buyers who believe in the promise of an urban lifestyle. We are selling the ultimate lifestyle choice,” said Mira Tomljenovic, principal of In2ition Realty. “The project as a whole is a perfect blend of form and function.”

“Along with a project vision and concept that we passionately believe in, a large part of

Parkside’s success; has been a formula that includes strong broker relationships coupled with a resale approach and a totally different boutique element to new home sales and marketing,” Tomljenovic explains. The strategy planning and execution of a successful sales program started months before the initial release of product, and it is our grass-roots approach that got us the outstanding results we were aiming for.”

With a feel reminiscent of great urban neighbourhoods that are out of all but the mil-

lionaire’s price range, Parkside Village offers a lifestyle choice that previously didn’t exist for the masses. So far, the reaction has been unabashedly enthusiastic. From customers lining up in the rain to city planners hopping on board, Amacon has sent shockwaves through Canada’s sixth largest city and beyond. Even dyed-in-the-wool Toronto urbanites who hold the view that the world ends with the 416 area code may soon find their fingers unexpectedly pushing 905. ■