

Toronto developers get more and more environmentally friendly

From exercise bikes that create electric power to Tesla chargers, condos get innovative with green initiatives



ROCKPORT DEVELOPMENTS

The Nest on St. Clair Avenue West is designed by environmentally friendly firm RAW.

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There's a big push underway to provide environmentally-friendly, sustainable condo development in Toronto. With LEED becoming the new building standard, architects and builders are looking to integrate even more green features into condominiums, from electric vehicle chargers in parking garages, to centralized rainwater-collecting irrigation systems, green roofs, and even solar-collecting windows.

We asked architect Erica Govan from RAW, what draws the organization to design green buildings.

“The human race.” she says, without hesitation. “If we don’t, I think we’re doomed. Also, we have a social responsibility as we encourage people to live downtown.”

Govan says that the City of Toronto has been doing a good job when it comes to green initiatives.

“When a developer wants to build these larger-than-life towers, the city is in a powerful position to make certain demands.”

The green roof bylaw is just one example of legislation that goes a long way to persuade builders to think green.

“Luckily, they’ve grasped that.” explains Govan. “The city administration says that if you’re going to build something that is a hundred more residential units than we would’ve thought at the beginning, then you have to provide an irrigation tank and you have to provide enough bicycle parking and you have to provide rough-in conduits for extra cars.”

Last year, RAW collaborated with Rockport Developments to design The Nest. The midrise residence aims to be a modestly-scaled addition to an established neighbourhood at the western extension of the St. Clair LRT, and is a great example of the new standard in green condo development.

With the city planning for more density in the Yonge Street corridor, Devron Developments saw an opportunity to shift the high-rise paradigm with The Vanguard condos, designed to the LEED Gold standard.

The building will house a centralized rainwater system to maintain its 7,000-square-foot green terrace. And this is very cool — the fitness bikes in the gym are rigged to feed electricity back into the building’s grid.

“Sustainable development is in our DNA,” says Devron’s chief operations officer, Pouyan Safapour. “Sustainability is about energy efficiency, water conservation and a greater awareness about your carbon footprint, and we’re always looking for innovative ways to go beyond the green standard.”

Additionally, there will be Tesla destination chargers installed on the ground floor of the building available to residents, making Devron the first developer in the GTA to claim a spot on the Tesla map.