

POST HOMES

Markham and Thornhill: the new condo capitals

Downtown amenities, uptown space

BY LISA VAN DE VEN

If you ask developer Morris Kansun why condo buyers want to live in Markham, he'll give you a number of reasons. But it all comes down to one thing: They like the lifestyle of living in south York Region.

"You're going to get buyers who have some attachments or roots in Markham already," says the president of Sierra Building Group. "They get the best of both worlds — there's that downtown experience but you don't have the problems of downtown Toronto, or some of the traffic."

Developers have been catering to condo buyers in Markham and Thornhill for years now, with a solid market throughout the area. That's not about to change anytime soon, either: The Remington Group is getting ready to release the next phase at its Downtown Markham master-planned project, while Kylemore Communities is bringing Angus Glen Mid Rise Garden Suites to market this summer, a new luxury condo site largely geared at empty nesters at its Angus Glen golf course community. As for Mr. Kansun, he's currently in pre-registration with the new 68 Main Street site in the historic area of Markham. Suites at the six-storey building range in size from 500 to 1,450 square feet and are priced from the low \$200,000s. It's surrounded by Markham's downtown amenities, which makes it great for young buyers. "Part of the beauty of this is, it's in an urban setting — you don't need a car wherever you go," he says. "And the GO train is less than a five-minute walk away, so you're in downtown Toronto in half an hour."

Tridel has also been catering to the Markham/Thornhill market, with occupancy already underway at its Circa 2 Markham Town Centre project at Highway 7 and Warden

Avenue. Only 29 of the site's 396 units remain, starting at \$355,000 and ranging from 949 to 1,690 sq. ft. Jim Ritchie, senior vice-president of sales and marketing with Tridel, says that buyers throughout the area have embraced the condo lifestyle.

"Markham certainly is a growing municipality," Mr. Ritchie says. "In addition to single-family living, it really has embraced condominium."

And if anyone should know that to be true, it's Liberty Development Corp., which has found lasting success in the area with its Thornhill City Centre master-planned community. Now the developer is getting ready to introduce new offerings at two separate sites. People lined up when its World on Yonge project at Yonge and Meadowview Avenue was released in the fall (it is 95% sold, but there's a new release of suites scheduled for the site in June). Prices and sizes aren't available for the new units yet, but remaining suites in the current phase range from 863 to 1,399 sq. ft. and are priced from \$376,000. The Yonge Street location is a big feature, says Shawn Richardson, sales and marketing manager with Liberty. "Anytime you're on Yonge Street, you draw people from all over the place — both end users and investors," he says.

But Liberty's expecting a slightly different buyer demographic at its new Thornhill site, The Fountains. Part of the Thornhill City Centre project, The Fountains will feature two towers — one 18 storeys, the other 16 — and will have a dramatic fountain feature as its centrepiece. It's also expected to be released in June, but prices and sizes aren't yet finalized.

If the earlier phases of Thornhill City Centre are anything to go by, though, Mr. Richardson expects a specific market at The Fountains — one that again has strong connections to the community. "It's very much local people," he says. "They're already well established in that area, and they like that area."