

# NEWHOMES

## Designed for local tastes

Oakville sales centre is a mix of modern/traditional



MARTIN SLOFSTRA  
EDITOR'S  
NOTE

Dominic De Freitas likes to tailor his designs to local home buyers, and his efforts are well-rewarded.

I caught up with the award-winning designer at the Trailside Presentation Centre in Oakville, which is this year's recipient of the Gold Prize in the Best Presentation Centre category at The National Sales and Marketing Awards held last month in Las Vegas.

As for Trailside, it's a development by Distrikt, a two-tower project that when complete will consist of about 700 residential units including condos, lofts, towns and two-storey executive suites.

As for the building, it will be modern, but the style will lean to more traditional. "Knowing that it is in Oakville, and there is a tendency for people in Oakville to gravitate to a traditional aesthetic, what we wanted to say is 'How do we combine those things?'" says De Freitas, principal of design firm Figure 3.

"Even if you don't live in Oakville, or are going to move to Oakville, it speaks to what you expect to have."

Many of the materials used — dark wood for shelving (filled with classic books), marble in the bathroom, cognac leather couches — are typically found in traditional designs. Particularly striking is a feature wall with the print of a traditional Victorian rose garden, something you would see at the turn of the century, and blown up to such a massive size so as to blur all the detail and give it the look of an abstract piece of art.

Those traditional items are in contrast with a number of modern elements such as the 'pale light' vinyl flooring, pendant lighting and contemporary lounge bar. Some of the other items combine both, for instance, a traditional Pope's chair is painted black to give it a modern feel.

The trick is to make this all come together in one harmonious whole, but the approach must be working, 75% of available units were sold in the first two months.



Designer Dominic De Freitas likes to create scenes that are timeless and classic. Here, a Victorian-style image is greatly enlarged to give it the look of an abstract work of art.

Based in Toronto, figure3 is a studio of 60+ designers, and other notable residential projects include Transit City in Vaughan and The Well in downtown Toronto.

The approach taken in other cities is to fit the sales office into those environments while weaving in the kind of experience that makes the buyer feel good about the huge purchase they are about to make.

"What we don't want is to make this feel like a hard-sell, to come across as a typical sales environment that has a retail approach to it," says De Freitas.

Last month, Figure3 took home a Gold Prize from The National Sales and Marketing Awards for its design of the Trailside Presentation Centre in Oakville.

Having a location on a downtown street also helps. The Trailside Presentation Centre is located at 39 Lakeshore Rd. E. in Oakville.

"Knowing we have this sidewalk presence, we wanted to utilize that, and allow foot traffic to make it easy to come and see it," says De Freitas.

"We kept the video screen and scale model right in the front window, and the model is actually designed to tilt up so people who walk by it can look through the window and get an appreciation for it."

Also, of note, all floor plans are digitally displayed on a large screen TV only, instead of the hardboard floor plans you see in a typical sales centre.

This is important, says De Freitas because it frees up space "to convey what it is really going to be like to live in this building."

Meanwhile, the accolades for De Freitas keep coming. Trailside by Distrikt has just been nominated for Best Sales Centre for the Canadian Home Builders' Association Awards to be held in April.

It's more affirmation for the approach taken by De Freitas who promises he will not give into trends, because as we all know, these trends come and go so fast.

"I'm a timeless kind of person, I gravitate towards classic. Everything you see here will stand the test of time," he promises.

## Look west for true innovation in tall wood homes



RICHARD LYALL  
RESCON

"It's good to be Alberta-bound." — Gordon Lightfoot

I couldn't help but think of this 1972 ditty by the Canadian icon when I heard the recent news that a province better known for its oil industry than its forestry sector will permit wood towers up to 12 storeys, doubling the previous building code height limit.

Here, we're still stuck on six in The Six (and the rest of Ontario). "This despite the fact that MPP Vic Fedeli (now a minister) tabled Bill 19 in March 2018 that would allow mass-timber buildings up to 14 storeys. It's still under consideration.

Back to Alberta: this prairie province has made this very shrewd move ahead of the National Building Code, which will likely adopt a similar change within the next year.

The reasons it cited to make the move now included supporting the forestry industry, improving housing affordability, boosting employment and helping the development industry. Most importantly ...

"We made this change knowing that mass-timber products are safe and that these buildings will meet all necessary standards," Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Kaycee Madu said in a press release.

Mass-timber buildings are also quieter and quicker to construct.

And let's not forget the environmental benefits of building with wood, which sequesters carbon. Take, for example, the University of British Columbia's Brock Commons, an 18-storey student residence tower in Vancouver completed in 2017. The mass-timber structure for the Commons sequestered about 1,750 tonnes of carbon in its timber and prevented almost 680 tonnes of emissions from the construction process in comparison to using other building materials. That's like taking more than 500 cars off the road for an entire year.

It has taken a few years for Ontario builder/developers to plan and build six-storey light wood-frame build-

ings, and once again, the country's economic engine (so we tell ourselves) can't keep up with other Canadian jurisdictions when it comes to engineered mass timber.

For a little perspective, RESCON teamed up with several key stakeholders, including our friends at BILD, to help bring in six-storey wood in 2015, raising the limit from four. At the time, it was such a big step in our industry's evolution that RESCON was recognized as a champion of wood buildings production by both the Wood WORKS! wood awards and the Ontario Forestry Industries Association.

These accolades were an honour, but they seem like a lifetime ago. There are many mass-timber projects in Canada and Europe going higher than six.

- In Vienna, there's the 24-storey HoHo project.

- Vancouver is building the 19-storey Terrace House.

- In Brumunddal, Norway, an 18-storey building called Mjøstårnet was finished last year.

- The University of Toronto is planning to build a 14-storey tower. Cart before horse without the regulations in place? I call it ambition (it's being done under the more onerous alternative solutions approval process; that's for another

- George Brown College has a 12-storey tower in the works for its waterfront campus (same story as U of T).

- Quebec City has a 13-storey residential condo building called Origine.

- In Montreal, there's Arbora, a condo community of three eight-storey towers.

And there are a lot more. I've heard of several mass-timber projects around the world planned for 30-plus storeys (including Sidewalk Labs' recent 35-storey proposal for Toronto). But let's not go there today.

Right now, the focus for Ontario is to go from six to 14. Let's get this done.

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