

NEWHOMES

It's time construction had a digital transformation



RICHARD LYALL
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Like the auto industry, home building and condo industry can improve through technological advances.

It's time that Canada — led by the GTA — gets on board with digitization to help us break the myth that our industry is behind the times and only involved in dirty, heavy labour.



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I'm referring to Building Information Modelling (BIM). Right now, Canada is the only country in the G7 without a national BIM mandate (or at least a planned mandate).

Considering that Canada is a member of that elite group and is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it seems crazy that we are not only behind the U.S., the U.K. and France, but Denmark, Finland and Singapore as well — much smaller countries than Canada.

So why, you ask, should you care? Because BIM is the leading-edge multi-dimensional process used by architects, engineers and construction (AEC) professionals (and possibly regulators) to efficiently plan, design, construct, and manage buildings and infrastructure.



Building Innovation Resource Centre director and University of Toronto professor Brenda McCabe can't emphasize enough how important it is to align research with design and construction.

It has the capability of allowing multi-disciplinary professionals to work collaboratively on the same platform.

At the very least, implementing a BIM mandate can help the industry and municipalities get on track to help streamline approvals and building timelines so that you, dear reader, and other new-home buyers can get into their new condos and homes more quickly.

Sure, Canada's construction industry has been widely criticized for its slow adoption of new technologies over the last two decades, but there has been a significant shift towards a journey into digitalization by our industry.

A big part of that shift has involved the University of Toronto's Building Innovation Research Centre, which

has partnered with RESCON and the Toronto BIM Community (tBIMc) in 2017 in conducting a detailed survey of BIM implementation among Canadian AECs and facility management industries. Its success attracted interest from national BIM organizations, CANBIM and BuildingSMART Canada.

One key question in the 2018 survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statement that adopting BIM can:

- Improve visualization (81%)
- Bring cost efficiency (67%)
- Enable international collaboration (56%)
- Increase profitability (54%)
- Increase speed of delivery (53%)
- Enable new types of project (53%)

It was refreshing to see respondents generally agree with the perceived benefits of BIM.

(Complete analysis of the first two annual BIM surveys can be found at <https://buildingtall.utoronto.ca>.)

"I can't emphasize enough how important it is to align the research priorities of BIRC with the research gaps in Canada's construction and design industry," said BIRC's director, Prof. Brenda McCabe of the civil and mineral engineering department at the University of Toronto. "These surveys are envisioned as an effective and transparent communication channel for the industry to inform not only the research priorities for academia, but also the technological directions of the municipal and provincial government agencies."

All of this is to say that BIRC has launched their third annual BIM survey. Feel free to visit and share with your friends in the AEC community. BIRC is aiming for 1,000 participants from across the country this year.

I can't wait to share the results of the national BIM survey with you in the New Year.

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BARBARA LAWLOR
CONDO PRO

Accommodating an inter-generational way of life

Recently, I read the term "inter-generational living," and I thought how appropriate it is for many of today's new condominium purchasers. Long ago, "multigenerational" was a way of life for Canadian families who lived in rural areas or even cities in low-rise homes.

They shared their homes, farms and lives out of tradition and often, necessity. Culturally and internationally, this has been, and continues to be, an accepted practice, especially with the number of immigrants Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area welcome each year.

I have written many times about growing families choosing to raise their children in condos for a multitude of reasons such as security and convenience. At Baker Real Estate Incorporated, nowadays we also see a lot of families with grown children opting to live in the same suite or different suites in the same building.

This scenario takes on different parameters, depending on the family involved. One example is parents whose post-secondary education enrolled children are living with them for economic reasons. Having beautiful amenities available, as well as maintenance of those and the building's exterior, frees up precious time for these busy individuals.

Rather than paying out for residence and room and board, the family saves thousands and thousands to put toward their mortgages. With the spectrum of suite designs available nowadays, many of which have three or more bedrooms and two baths, the possibilities are exciting.

Many millennials who are out in the working world are moving back in with their parents to save money toward owning homes themselves. Again, this can work well for all of the above reasons. With condominiums located near amenities and public transit access, the ability to live without owning a vehicle is very appealing.

Another situation we see a lot of is parents helping their grown children

purchase suites in the same condominium, often on different floors. This translates to living together, yet apart - convenience and privacy all at once.

The opposite happens from time to time as well. Adult children including even empty-nesters may opt to purchase a suite in the same condo they live in for their aging parents. This makes helping to care for the older generation more convenient.

With maintenance handled by the condominium corporation, time is freed up to spend with family members of all ages. Gone are the days of driving to parents' homes to help them with yard work and snow-clearing. Building elevators and single-storey living are also handy for those who have mobility issues.

Intergenerational, multigenerational ... the condominium lifestyle offers a carefree way to embrace the enjoyment of family and friends. Residents of all ages can exercise, socialize, entertain, relax and share their lives without leaving the building - and when they do leave, they have the benefit of local amenities just a brisk walk or brief cab, car, bus or subway ride away.

They also have the peace-of-mind that comes from the built-in security features in today's new condos. From the concierge supplying "eyes on the street" to cameras placed strategically in key areas such as the parking facilities, safety factors in as a key benefit.

Add to that the fact that condominiums are in essence vertical communities where neighbours get to know each other in shared areas, and the picture is a pleasant one.

Whatever your age or family configuration, consider a new condominium as your residence of choice. Life is short, so making the most of the time you have is important. Whether it is one large suite for two or more generations, or two or more suites in the same building, condominium living can be the perfect answer to your lifestyle needs. As I love to say, GO CONDO!

Barbara Lawlor is president and CEO of Baker Real Estate Incorporated. A member of the Baker team since 1993, she oversees the marketing and sales of condominium developments in the GTA and overseas. Keep current with The Baker Blog at blog.bakerrealestate.com