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Reina at Royal York and the Queensway is offering 197 units over nine storeys.

PROJECT'S A GAME-CHANGER

FOCUS IS ON PARENT-FRIENDLY AMENITIES AT CITY'S FIRST WOMEN-LED CONDO DEVELOPMENT THAT'S COMING TO ETOBICOKE'S QUEENSWAY

IRIS BENAROA

Urban parenting is intense — from the cost of day care to finding a spot to wedge the stroller, to schlepping kids daily to the jungle gym.

So Taya Cook, the development director

of Urban Capital, and Sherry Larjani, the managing partner at Spotlight Development, asked themselves, What if a condo had meaningful amenities and floor plans that could really improve parents' lives?

Reina, or "queen" in Spanish, tackles that proposition head on. The midrise 197-unit condo, which is being built on the Queen-

sway at Royal York in Etobicoke, is notable not only for its clever family features but its foray as the first women-led condo development in the city.

From the architecture to the engineering and construction management, there's a woman behind every part of the project.

See REINA on HP3



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— TAYA COOK, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OF URBAN CAPITAL



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STRIVING FOR WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS

REINA
Continued from HP1

“We wanted to show young girls or women looking to get into this industry that there is a place for them,” says Cook, who hopes the condo will help bring gender parity to the male-dominated building industry.

Even its white-brick exterior feels feminine: a curved facade softens the nine-storey condo, melding into the surrounding landscape. Both its colour and shape recalls Bauhaus architecture — Tel Aviv’s buildings come to mind. The rounded corners of the Quadrangle-designed building, who also did the interiors, create generous setbacks on the east and west side. A series of picketed balconies will wrap around the condominium, with incredible south-facing views overlooking an exterior courtyard.

Construction starts a year from now, with a move-in date slated for 2023. Prices start in the \$500s for 510 square feet. The range of one-bedroom, one-bedroom plus den, two-bedroom plus den and three-bedroom layouts reach up to 1,350 square feet.

As for amenities, Cook’s team polled women — and yes, men too — to figure out which direction they should go.

“Nobody asks the condominium buyer, ‘How do you want the kitchen to look, or the layout, or what amenities do you want?’ By the time it’s built that has already been designed,” says Cook.

She says that’s why Reina will have 25 per cent more interior amenity space than Toronto’s standard, and almost double the exterior space, despite the fact that it takes away from sellable space. According to Cook, it’s what the public wants.

Last June, Reina’s team conducted a design consultation with 175 invited guests. A mix of industry insiders, friends and family,

THREE THINGS

- 1. Take the kids to the old-timey Tom’s Dairy Freeze.** Etobicoke’s iconic ice cream shop that serves old-fashioned sundaes, banana splits, milkshakes, hamburgers and french fries that’s been open since 1969. Get there early to beat the long lineup. 630 The Queensway
- 2. Bombolini on your mind?** The pillowy, habit-forming Italian doughnuts and other tasty bites (think porchetta submarines, eggplant parmigiana, deli-loaded focaccia sandwiches with arugula) are how the family-owned SanRemo Bakery has been crushing it for 51 years. 374 Royal York Rd.
- 3. Reina is located in a school catchment that includes:** Etobicoke School of the Arts, a high school known for its drama, music and dance programs. 675 Royal York Rd.

neighbours and the general public participated in the one-day session. They were first asked about the challenges they’d encountered with condo living. The top problems cited were layout (78), storage (71) and soundproofing (50).

In July, they followed up with a questionnaire on Reina’s website. “I didn’t expect much pickup, to be honest, but we got hundreds of responses. People were writing essays,” says Cook.

“There is such a desire for people to talk about their homes and how they’re built,” she adds. Later that winter, Reina’s team reached out to the Girl Guides, asking the tweens to discuss their dream amenity spaces.

“All of them said food,” says Cook. “Girls of that age want a place to snack and hang out.”

Which is why the team

created a snack shack. The comfy room will have three Japanese-style vending machines stocked with food, healthy drinks and household essentials like Advil and diapers.

“It’s like a mini convenience store in your building,” says Cook. “If you need something at midnight, you just come downstairs.”

Other family-friendly bonuses include a fob-accessible room with stroller parking on every floor; thicker walls and blackout blinds to help kids at naptime; additional storage space in the suites; enough room for multi-generational living; and a 6,500-square-foot outdoor courtyard with communal workspaces, barbecues and a kids’ area.

Because many people cited the importance of living with greenery, the design allows residents to see directly through to the courtyard from the lobby.

And there’s a gym and yoga studio with lower weights, resistance training and a much more welcoming feel. Most importantly, the glassed space overlooks the kids’ area, meaning there’s no need to hire a babysitter.

“We thought, can we create a room where I can have space, do yoga or do weights and be able to see them and not be on top of each other,” says Cook, noting there’s also a hobby room beside the kids’ room.

“It’s a space to get messy, to do woodworking or even knit. What’s also cool is that the whole walls slide away and open up into the kids’ room,” says Cook. Big enough for pizza and cake and a bolsterous crew of kids, it’s ideal for a birthday party. “You’ve got a place that’s kid-friendly and fun but also space for the adults,” says Cook.

A welcome idea, to be sure.

Prices start in the \$500s. For more information, visit www.reinacondos.com.

Postmedia News



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