

Underpass Park will benefit residents

River City brings more
suites to market as
parkland takes shape

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

David Wex has been so impressed with what's happening at Underpass Park that the developer recently threw a party there to show it off to his colleagues and associates.

"It's a really interesting, quirky space" says Wex, a partner with Urban Capital, builder of River City, the 900-unit, four-phase residential project that's taking root near the foot of the Don River south of King St. E.

River City will benefit greatly from the creation of this new public space. Designed by Vancouver landscape architecture firm Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg (along with Toronto's The Planning Partnership), Underpass Park will transform the derelict region under the Eastern Ave. and Adelaide and Richmond Sts. overpasses — all of which cut through River City — into an animated community passageway complete with tables, seating and greenery.

And Wex thinks it has succeeded admirably.

"Now it's an asset as opposed to being a liability," he says.

Penthouses on the river

RIVER CITY from HI

Underpass Park is slated to open to the public next year.

Meanwhile, Urban Capital has launched the second phase of River City, the first residential development in Waterfront Toronto's West Don Lands master plan and the first residential development in Canada to be built to LEED Gold standards.

Construction recently began on the 350-unit first phase, a project that won the 2010 BILD Award for Best Building Design.

The second phase of River City consists of 249 units in a 12-storey building that is divided into three mini-towers, connected to one another by glass passageways.

The phase two buildings — designed by Montreal-based Saucier + Perrotte Architects and Toronto's ZAS Architects, the same firms that worked on phase one — will have sleek white exteriors, a deliberately lighter contrast to the darker exteriors of the buildings in the project's first and third phases.

"The concept is that these light, shiny jewel boxes will be surrounded by the edgy dark exteriors of phases one and three," Wex says. The intention is to evoke the area's industrial past and "juxtapose" it with the rejuvenation that River City will bring to the area.

River City 2's 249 units range in size from 400-square-foot studios to 2,000-square-foot penthouses. Prices go from \$239,900 to \$1.15 million.

River City launched the townhomes and penthouse suites last week. The penthouses go up to 1,877 square feet and start at \$639,900. They will have 10-foot ceilings, gas barbecue hookups on private rooftop terraces and Saucier + Perrotte

signature staircases.

The loft-style condos will have nine-foot ceilings, rolling doors and floor-to-ceiling windows.

Kitchens have stone countertops and islands, undermount stainless steel sinks and five Energy Star stainless steel appliances. Bathrooms have vanities with vessel sinks, stone countertops, and custom tubs or showers with wood slat detailing and full-height tile surrounds.

In terms of amenities, River City 2 will have a 15,000-square-foot landscaped courtyard with heated outdoor pool; a party room, exercise room, billiards room, guest suite, and a screening room and Wi-Fi-equipped business centre.

Sales have been splendid so far for River City's first phase, Wex says. He reckons buyers understand the importance of getting in while the real estate is relatively affordable. "It's still an area people don't know, so there's a discount for it," he says.

"But very soon, when all the streets are in and people start driving through it — you drive down Bayview as opposed to having to turn at the bottom — they'll see this whole area become a big part of the city."

River City residents will be able to take advantage of the new Don River Park, a \$15-million, 18-acre waterfront park whose creation was a virtue made out of absolute necessity: it sits atop a massive flood protection landform. "It started off as, 'Oh, we're going to have to build this big pile of dirt so we can move on, but now it's turned into a huge feature that also adds to the (community's) green space,'" says John Campbell, CEO of Waterfront Toronto, the agency managing Toronto's waterfront revitalization.



Phase two of River City is a 12-storey building divided into three mini-towers, connected by glass passageways.



Underpass Park is one part of the Don Lands revitalization project.

Designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates — the same team that designed Pier 1 Brooklyn Bridge Park and Hudson River Park in New York — Don River Park will occupy the south-eastern portion of the West Don Lands, running along the Don River from King St. to the rail corridor in the south.

The park divides the West Don Lands into two distinct halves. On

the side of the park nearest to the river — where any flooding would occur — there will be a 7.9-acre urban prairie grassland, with meadows, meandering trails and a boardwalk.

"I recall back when Michael first presented the plans to us," Campbell says. "He talked about driving down the DVP and looking at native species and deciding this park

DOWN BY THE RIVER (CITY)

Developer: Urban Capital Property Group, www.urbancapital.ca

Architect: Saucier + Perrotte, www.saucierperrotte.com

Size: Three 12-storey mini-towers and townhouses

Units: 249; from 400 sq. ft. to 1,266 sq. ft.

Prices: \$239,900 to \$1.15 million

Sales centre: 554 Queen St. E., Monday to Wednesday noon to 6 p.m.; Thursday 2 to 7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.

Contact: 416-862-0505, www.rivercitytoronto.com, info@rivercitytoronto.com

should have more native species; it shouldn't be a manicured park with artificial implanted, imported species. It should be more naturalized."

The prospect is certainly a pleasant one for developer Wex. "It's all coming together now after quite a while of people waiting," he says. "It's taken 30 years for this area to really get going, so it's great. I think it's really cool."