

URBAN DESIGN

Master-planned a popular way to go

It's about getting the right mix of community and convenience

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Special to QMI Agency

Long before they move into their units, purchasers at The Kip District are already developing a “sense of place.” They have a catchy nickname — Kipsters — and they’re using a blog to share how they envision life at The Kip.

It’s all part of creating a successful master-planned community, says Brian McCauley, president and chief operating officer of Concert Properties, which is developing the five-tower condominium community at Kipling Ave. and Dundas St. W. in Etobicoke, Ont.

“You have to do a pretty good job at the early stages of being able to share your vision ... to demonstrate to

lies and new immigrants who want to live near the downtown core of major cities.

The result is an urban village, a grouping of buildings that includes common amenities, green space and usually some retail, and is close to modern day conveniences like public transit, food stores and other services.

“It’s the idea of getting back to a walkable community,” says McCauley. “You can go out your door and within walking distance get some groceries or go to the pharmacy or whatever it might be.”

Unlike multi-phased condo developments, which tend to be cookie cutter replicas of the same building with no real cohesiveness other than they look the same, master-



Unlike multi-phase condo developments which tend to be cookie-cutter, master-planned communities take into account common areas.



Concert Properties is developing a five-tower condominium property in Etobicoke that is all part of a master-planned community.

people that you really are trying to create that sense of place,” says McCauley.

These days, master-planned communities are a far cry from the suburban, single family home developments that popped up post World War II. That model is being “urbanized,” says McCauley, as developers focus more on delivering convenience to millennials, aging fami-

planned communities take into account the public realm — in other words, the way people experience the buildings and streetscape. For Concert that includes taking time to think things through and to consider how the buildings complement one another.

One of the fundamental requirements is land. “You can’t create a master-planned community on a small par-

cel of land,” he says, pointing out that it’s often difficult to find the required space in the heart and soul of a city’s downtown.

Next is proximity to transit; not simply subways and buses, but considerations like direct connections to the airport or rush hour GO train service as well. Third, a strong master-planned community will have a mix of hous-

ing opportunities, which may include for-sale condominiums, purpose-built rentals or adult lifestyle buildings.

According to Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2015, published by PwC, urbanization is a key force shaping Canada’s real estate market. “People are flooding into city cores to live close to both work and the lifestyle they crave,” it states.

For developers of master-planned communities, the means a growing demand

for convenience and more emphasis on larger-scale community-based amenities.

“In general, we’re seeing greater use of amenity spaces,” points out McCauley. “It could be the demographic profile ... It’s also a function of suite size. As your suite sizes in the downtown core, particularly Toronto, have gotten smaller, people are looking for that communal living room space.”

Glance at some of the 80-

and 90-storey condominiums currently occupying the Toronto skyline and you may wonder whether it’ll ever be possible to create a sense of community.

“You need to create a sense of place and that could be a combination of well designed, well thought out open space that creates a park-like setting, but it could also be a complement of good convenience retail,” he says. “Inevitably, it will be some form of recreational space as well.”



One of the fundamental requirements of a master-planned community is land needed for green space and modern day conveniences such as retail.