



CENTRECOURT DEVELOPMENTS

CentreCourt's Transit City condos is the first residential tower being launched in SmartREIT's Vaughan Metropolitan Centre development. The 55-storey building will be the tallest landmark in Vaughan's skyline.

# Bringing an urban vibe to Vaughan's city core

Transit City condo building will be the first residential development in a 100-acre project

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A 55-storey, residential tower that will be the tallest landmark on Vaughan's emerging skyline, is being touted for bringing a distinctly urban vibe to that city's ambitious downtown plans.

CentreCourt Developments' Transit City condos will be the first residential building in SmartREIT's 100-acre Vaughan Metropolitan Centre development called SmartCentres Place.

One of the biggest mixed commercial-residential projects in Canada, the master-planned community is bounded by Hwy. 400 on the west, Jane St. to the east, Portage Pkwy. on the north and Hwy. 7 to the south.

It's an area roughly equivalent to downtown Toronto between University Ave. and Jarvis St., and Wellington and Richmond Sts.

The condos are part of a shift in the understanding of suburban and downtown lifestyles, said Andrew Hoffman, CEO of CentreCourt Developments, which has built about 3,000 condos in downtown Toronto.

Transit City, scheduled for occupancy in 2020, is the company's first 905-area project. It is also the first 905 location for downtown Toronto restaurant brand, Buca.

There will be a 1,500 sq. ft. Bar Buca providing refreshments morning through evening in the condo lobby and an adjacent 4,500 sq. ft. restaurant with Buca's signature artisanal Italian menu.

The Buca name is a "huge signal" that Vaughan Metropolitan Centre has downtown credibility, said Mitchell Goldhar of SmartREIT, which bought the Vaughan property in 1996.

It is the TTC's Vaughan Metropolitan Centre subway stop, however, that is "a game changer," he said.

"You hop on that subway and you are downtown at Union Station with certainty in 40 minutes," Hoff-



STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR

SMARTREIT's Mitchell Goldhar, left, with CentreCourt's Andrew Hoffman, says Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is a "blank slate."

man said.

The condos will sit adjacent to the Viva/York Region bus terminal, a hub for the Viva rapid bus transit along Hwy. 7, which has tunnel access to the subway station.

"The beauty of (Vaughan Metropolitan Centre) is, it is a blank slate in terms of planning," Goldhar said.

"This is the ultimate opportunity to plan a city centre the way we all know great cities were planned, the ones we all travel great distances to go to. The opportunity to do that here is like none other in Canada," he said.

It is also an enormous civic responsibility.

That's why the foundation of the development is a nine-acre park running east-west through the middle of the community.

It is the open spaces that make cities great, Goldhar said. So other aspects of the community are being planned around access to the park.

VAUGHAN continued on **GT6**



# Hub poised for success that has eluded others

VAUGHAN from GT1

Condo residents will be able to access Vaughan's new 100,000-sq.-ft. flagship YMCA, which will also adjoin a new library and a community centre.

The transit-, pedestrian-, bike-friendly infrastructure, along with new KPMG and PwC offices, is the result of the province's land-planning policies that are encouraging denser development, Goldhar said.

"There's policy, there's politics and there's business. They are scarcely in sync. But when they are it can be a very powerful," he said.

Vaughan Metropolitan Centre appears poised for the kind of success that has eluded some other Toronto area downtowns, said Cherise Burda, executive director of the Ryerson City Building Institute.

The Scarborough Town Centre, for example, hasn't attracted the kind of commercial development that Toronto hopes a new planned subway extension will inspire. But the market likes Vaughan, Burda said.

"I think the subway is part of it," she said. "The developers are building neighbourhoods. They're not building random buildings."

The intensification of housing in live-work-play neighbourhoods that would once have been cast as traditional suburbs, will make condo living a more common choice outside downtown Toronto, Hoffman said.

"The nature (of housing) is going to evolve over time and is going to be the trend toward larger size units," he said.

Transit City, he said, "is a best-in-class designed building in a growing area of the GTA with the benefits of proximity to major transit infrastructure, key amenities of the YMCA and the services of a top restaurant operator in Buca at the base of the building," he said.

It's a "forward-thinking, pioneering" development, said Peter Tsebelis of the King Street Food Company, Buca's parent.

SmartREIT and CentreCourt developments see restaurants as amenities that neighbourhoods demand, he said.

"We're not into the quick, we're not



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into the cool and the happening and, the right-now. All of our concepts are long-term . . . that become go-to spots, staples in a community," Tsebelis said.

"In terms of the menu, items will not change very much because, de-

spite the connotation of going to the 'burbs, the sophistication is there. The people know what they want. We see people will travel from the 905 to come down to King St. I don't think we need to change the offering whatsoever," he said.

Sales for the 550 Transit City condos will launch by June. Most will be in the 500- to 1,000-sq.-ft. range, larger than CentreCourt traditionally builds in the Toronto core. Prices haven't been determined, said Hoffman. But he promises the quality of

the construction and design will be superior to many units being sold in the core and the cost will be 20 to 30 per cent lower.

He expects construction to begin later this year or in early 2018 and occupancy is forecast for 2020.