

BEYOND

A Heaps Estrin Publication

The art of frictionless living

HOW OUR HOMES
AFFECT OUR WELL-BEING



HIDDEN GEMS: LITTLE-KNOWN LOCAL SPOTS THAT WILL HAVE YOU HEAD OVER HEELS FOR TORONTO AGAIN

BEYOND BORDERS: WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A NEWCOMER AND WHY THE GTA HOLDS APPEAL

HOW DECLUTTERING HELPS: DONATE TO THESE DESERVING CHARITIES AFTER SPRING CLEANING



Issue

03

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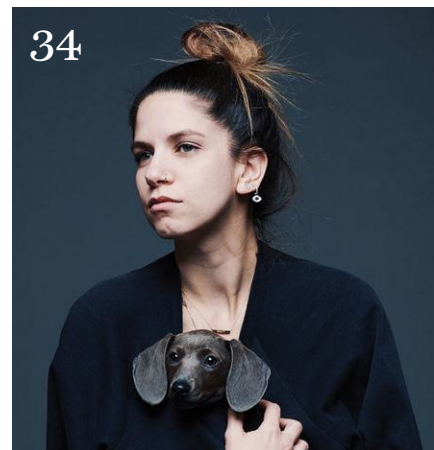
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ELEVATED CONVERSATIONS

I AM DELIGHTED TO PRESENT the third issue of *BEYOND*, which, in my opinion, is the best one yet.

When we embarked on the inaugural edition of this publication, there were a few cynics in the crowd who saw the initiative as a lofty one, or perhaps even ill-advised. There was a perception that the magazine might resemble the all-too-familiar self-promotional pieces cluttering midtown's mailboxes.

And then people picked up the issue. They soon discovered that it was bursting with pertinent, thoughtful and well-written stories that applied directly to their everyday lives. They found their city, their neighbourhoods and themselves among these pages, which is perfect because that has always been entirely the point.

Our goal, when we started *BEYOND*, was to elevate the conversations that we have around real estate and to embrace our roles, not only as market advisors, but as lifestyle ambassadors in a city that we love and for a community of people whom we adore.

When it comes to the business of real estate, however, it is a topic in which we are obviously deeply invested. It goes without saying that since our last issue, the market has undergone some well-publicized shifts. With those shifts, expectations, too,

have required some adjusting. What had been a climate of multiple offers and record-breaking prices transformed rather rapidly as interest rates climbed and consumer confidence dipped in equal measure. The good news, however, is that the economic corrections seem to have performed in their utterly predictable fashion and the tide is once again turning.

The end of 2023 brought with it a halt to rate hikes, and we are now poised to see a steady rate and perhaps even cuts to the ever-important prime lending number in the not-too-distant future. The result, we expect, will be a healthy and active spring market. Above all, 2024 will see increased alignment between buyer and seller sentiment, improved consumer confidence, lower borrowing costs and greater numbers of transactions across most, if not all, categories. In central Toronto, where things

never slowed down to the degree that they did in other markets, this rebound will likely be even more robust.

Interested in taking a deeper dive into current market conditions? Check out Denise Deveau's Market Watch (page 7) for a closer look at what to expect in the coming months. In this issue, we also look at the emotional side of buying and selling in Sarah Hampson's At Home column (page 10), provide a glimpse into the top Toronto projects to watch (page 12), explore some of the city's hidden gems (page 21), and explore the joys of frictionless living (page 24).

We hope that, once again, you find yourself among these pages. You are, after all, the inspiration behind this publication and the reason that we love what we do.

Warm wishes and happy reading!

Cailey Heaps
*President & CEO, Broker of Record
 The Heaps Estrin Real Estate Team*

MASTHEAD

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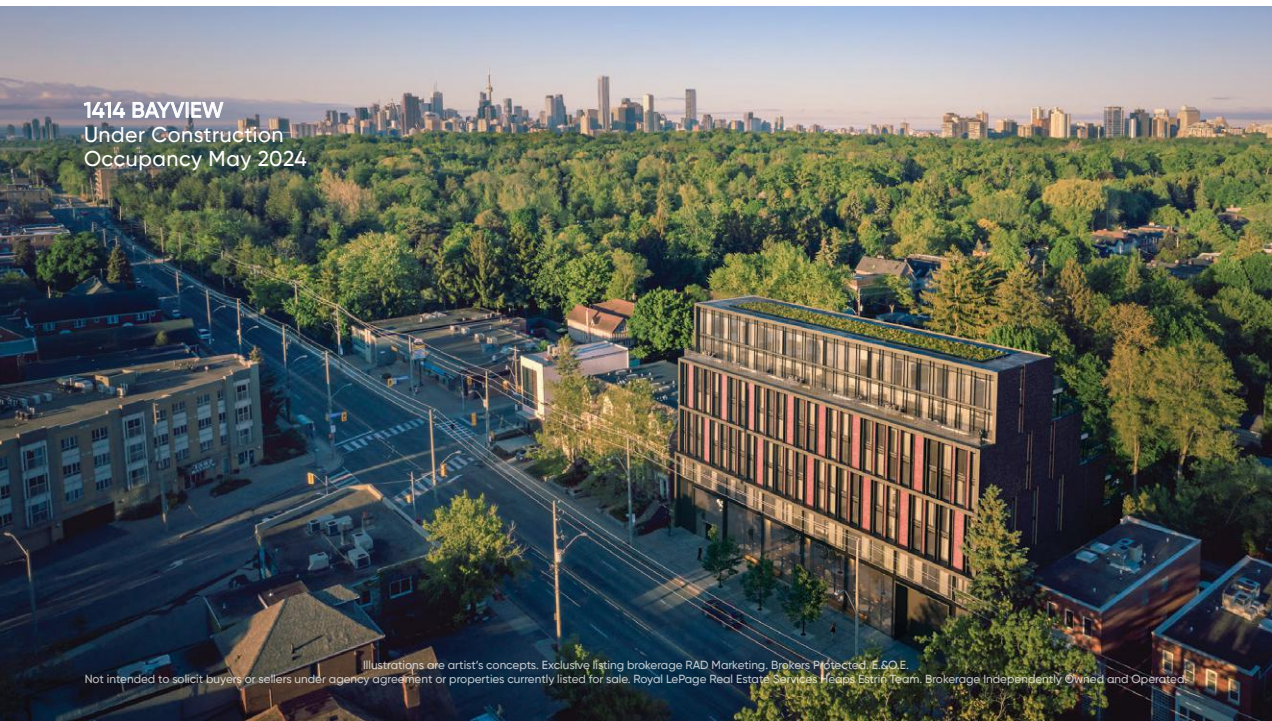
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MARKET WATCH

THE
CONDOMINIUM
MARKET WILL
REACH
A TURNING
POINT IN 2024

WORDS BY
DENISE DEVEAU

AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY, declining sales and rising interest rates, the outlook is improving for Toronto's condominium market. However, progress will be slow, as there is every expectation that availability and affordability will remain a challenge for buyers.

The latest Royal LePage Market Survey predicts that the real estate market will return "closer to normal" and is forecasting a year-over-year five per cent increase in condominium pricing in Q4 2024. Much of that will be contingent upon whether the Bank of Canada announces the moderate interest rate cuts economists are expecting.

"The market is essentially an interest rate story," says Robert Hogue, assistant chief economist, RBC. "In 2022, during the pandemic, interest rates were cut to almost zero, which stimulated demand, creating an overheated market. When the Bank of Canada started raising interest rates, the impact was instantaneous. Home resale activity in all the GTA and elsewhere was the lowest since the 2008/2009 global crisis."

With 2023 in the rear-view mirror, Hogue expects to see a turning point in the latter part of 2024. "I see 2024 as a year of two halves," says Hogue. While we have already seen measured activity, he expects more of a lift in the second half of the year. If the Bank of Canada begins cutting rates as expected, it will open the window for certain buyers on the sidelines and unleash that pent-up demand.

The recent atmosphere in the condominium market has been driven by finances, confirms Cailey Heaps, president and CEO of Heaps Estrin. "Having guided our clients through other down markets, though, we know that Toronto is resilient and any negative market changes do not typically last long."

Early 2024 is showing the beginnings of some positive movement, but 2025 will see signs of an even stronger recovery, she notes. "Economic growth is expected to strengthen around the middle of 2024, but it will take some time to see the full effects. This, coupled with the city's population being

"I SEE 2024 AS A YEAR OF TWO HALVES." WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN MEASURED ACTIVITY. EXPECT MORE OF A LIFT IN THE SECOND HALF.

in a perpetual state of growth, means that the condo market is poised to experience markedly increased demand, something we will no doubt see by 2025."

New inventory is not coming as quickly as needed, says Heaps. "Pre-construction sales have been slower since mid-2023, meaning that some developers have paused their projects. This lack of new inventory will cause prices to climb quickly."

The amount of backlogged demand in the condominium market will be an interesting story over the next few years, says Megan Till-Landry, real estate agent for Heaps Estrin. "Even if there is a constant supply of new inventory, there still won't be enough new condos to meet demand."

Investors continue to show restraint, notes Benjamin Tal, deputy chief economist, CIBC World Markets Inc. "What we are seeing on the investor front is a buyers' market."

If interest rates do come down in the spring, as expected, investor interest may very well come back. "It will be at least six months into 2025 before we see solid recovery. But supply won't be there for the next two years, so we can expect to see prices start rising. The trajectory of the market is going to be very tight."

The challenges, however, will not deter determined buyers over the long term, says Hogue. "Even though some people can't afford home ownership right now, they haven't given up on their ownership dreams." ■

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ELEGANCE PRESERVED

DISCOVERING SOUTH HILL'S ARCHITECTURAL JEWEL

WORDS BY
ALEX COREY

*Heaps Estrin
Real Estate Agent and
Architectural Historian*

THE DAVENPORT ESCARPMENT

HOLDS deep historical importance in Toronto's evolution, from its origins as Lake Iroquois's shoreline and an Indigenous trail to its more recent history as an escape from the city's increasing smog. During the latter, the South Hill neighbourhood emerged, featuring a significant home designed by one of the city's most renowned architects.

Traversing the hilly, winding track of Poplar Plains Road, you'll pass the historic Macpherson Avenue Substation, and a collection of quaint cottages. Below leafy canopies, you might just miss a set of elegant Edwardian-era gates tucked back from the road. Behind these gates is a small grouping of homes that occupy an important place in Toronto's architectural and social history, including one by Arts and Crafts architect Eden Smith.

Born in 1858 in Birmingham, England, and arriving in Toronto in 1888, Smith had both an education in the increasingly popular Arts and Crafts movement and a keen awareness and intuition as to how it could be adapted for our city. Over his nearly three-decade career, Smith designed more than 2,500 homes across the city, with collections on Indian Road and throughout Wychwood Park and

South Hill. It was during his most prolific period around 1910 that he was commissioned to design a residence atop the Davenport escarpment for Sir Byron Edmund Walker, president of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Walker's success in finance fuelled his passion for art and philanthropy, and he became a co-founder of the Royal Ontario Museum and Art Gallery of Ontario. His collection of artworks, including dozens of pieces by Rembrandt and other European masters, was donated to the AGO after his death.

Upon completion of the house, his son Ewart and his wife Claire moved in, naming it Garthmore, a nod to Sir Walker's former home known as Long Garth (*garth* being an Old English word translating to "an enclosed yard or garden"), once located at 99 St. George Street but since demolished.

The design of Garthmore is quintessential Eden Smith, firmly rooted in the English Cottage tradition but on a grand scale, featuring sloping roofs that ground the structure and are punctuated by two large chimneys servicing the home's six fireplaces. The simplicity and informality of the design belies its close to 10,000 square feet of living space behind the brick and stucco facades.

Taking full advantage of the unique southwest exposure that the home's location affords, Smith placed the primary entertaining rooms at the rear of the house, looking out to the gardens, flooding the rooms with daylight and giving the upper storeys sweeping vistas. Additions by Ralph Smith—Eden's son and business partner—in 1924 included an extension of the drawing room, a garage and additional bedrooms for the growing Walker family.

The family resided at Garthmore until the 1960s, a testament to the ease of living and deep sense of home conveyed in many of Smith's domestic commissions. In 1966 the house was sold to the Shea's Theatre Company, and in 1976 transferred to Michael and Patricia Vaughan. Michael was a municipal and land use lawyer and a tireless advocate for heritage conservation. He led walking tours of the surrounding South Hill neighbourhood and advocated for livable, walkable and vibrant communities.

Garthmore continues to stand stoically proud, overlooking the Davenport escarpment, and has recently welcomed a new family who—like the home's first residents, Ewart and Claire Walker—fell in love with the property over Christmas, a fitting conclusion to its recent history, and a firm foundation for the next chapter of this storied home. 🏡

The Garthmore off-market listing was expertly sold by Kyle Frank of the Heaps Estrin Real Estate Team, and Christina Pinelli, of the same team, represented the buyer



The lives our homes hold

MOVING IS MORE THAN
JUST TRADING ONE SET OF
WALLS FOR ANOTHER

WORDS BY SARAH HAMPSON



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS SELLING MY HOUSE, a friend of mine encouraged me to employ a little trick she had used to expedite a sale. Take a wooden spoon from the kitchen, she said, turn the handle away from you and bury it in the garden.

Our houses hold our stories. We invest in them, not just financially, but emotionally and spiritually. This is partly why psychologists consider moving house the third-most-stressful life event, behind losing a loved one and divorce. There's the physical part of it, the packing and purging of things, but even if the move is a step forward, the farewell to the life lived within those walls can be difficult. We have to learn to let go of that chapter in our lives. Hence, the symbolism of a spoon, once used to stir up love and comfort in your kitchen, buried with the handle facing away from the owner.

Like me, this friend had lived in her house for many years. It was where her newborns were brought home from the hospital, where she and her partner had dreamed of their life together, the children they would have, the celebrations and the friends they would gather around their table.

"Our houses are pulsing with all that we carry in; they vibrate, hum, resonate with every cry and murmur and snap and cheer of our hearts," writes Dominique Browning, former editor of *House & Garden* magazine, in her book, *Around the House and in the Garden*. "They are our second skins, the shells we build, like snails,

enlarging and encrusting with whorls of our days, months, years. They are the most private and the most telling places.”

I often think of our homes as our private museums. We collect things and display them there, surrounding ourselves with reminders of how we see the world, where we have travelled and what we value. It is our spot in the universe that we can control, a safe place to dream and recharge.

During my years as a profile writer for magazines and newspapers, entry into a subject’s home was the best way to understand them. It took a few days of trust-building for Criss Angel, master illusionist, to let me into his residence at the apex of the pyramid-shaped Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas in 2008, where he was developing a show with Cirque de Soleil.

As soon as I entered, I knew I had my story. The custom-designed condo was filled with electronic games, a foosball table and a large electric train set that wound around the dining room. Mementoes, including newspaper reports from his various *Mindfreak* TV shows, were encased in a glass cabinet. The decor throughout was goth, with skull-and-bones fabric on sofas and plush velvets—not a cheery colour in sight.

It was a Peter Pan man cave in the sky for the then 41-year-old “new Houdini,” as he was being called. He was still a boy in many ways, still vulnerable, layered with a defensive shield of silver, gold and diamond bling, playing out his childhood fantasies with his toys and his warehouse full of luxury cars and motorcycles.

I had a similar experience in Los Angeles in 2001 when I was writing about Molly Parker, the Canadian actress (*Deadwood*, *Kissed*, *Suspicious River*, *Men with Brooms*). Notorious for guarding her privacy and being coolly remote in interviews, she agreed to meet and we and talked for several hours. Eventually, she invited me to come to her house

in the Silver Lake neighbourhood. For someone so poised and composed, tidy in her responses, her home was relaxed and ordinary: a linoleum-floored kitchen, an old-fashioned fridge, pictures of friends plastered on the wall, a small garden out back where she loved to tend her flowers. In her bedroom, clothes spilled from drawers.

It felt unexpected, but it was a revelation: in the LA world of image and spin, a home of laid-back ordinariness was clearly an important counterpoint. Upstairs, in a cavernous unfinished attic space, she stood silent for a moment, breathing deeply, and told me it reminded her of her hometown of Vancouver and how important that grounding is to her.

In the house moves that I have made in my life so far, each has marked a new beginning as well as an end to something. Canadians move five to six times in their lifetime, according to the Canadian Association of Movers, a number that likely reflects both tenants and homeowners. I have moved many more than that, as I grew up in a family with a father in business that necessitated moves across Canada and the world. By the time I was 10, I had attended five schools in different cities.

As an adult, there was a starter home; a family house; then a bigger house; a move after a divorce; a move after a wonderful 20-year chapter of rebuilding my life as a single mother and then in a new marriage; and a recent move with my second husband to a dream house by the ocean where we will grow old, garden and walk, and wake to a view of astonishing dawns.

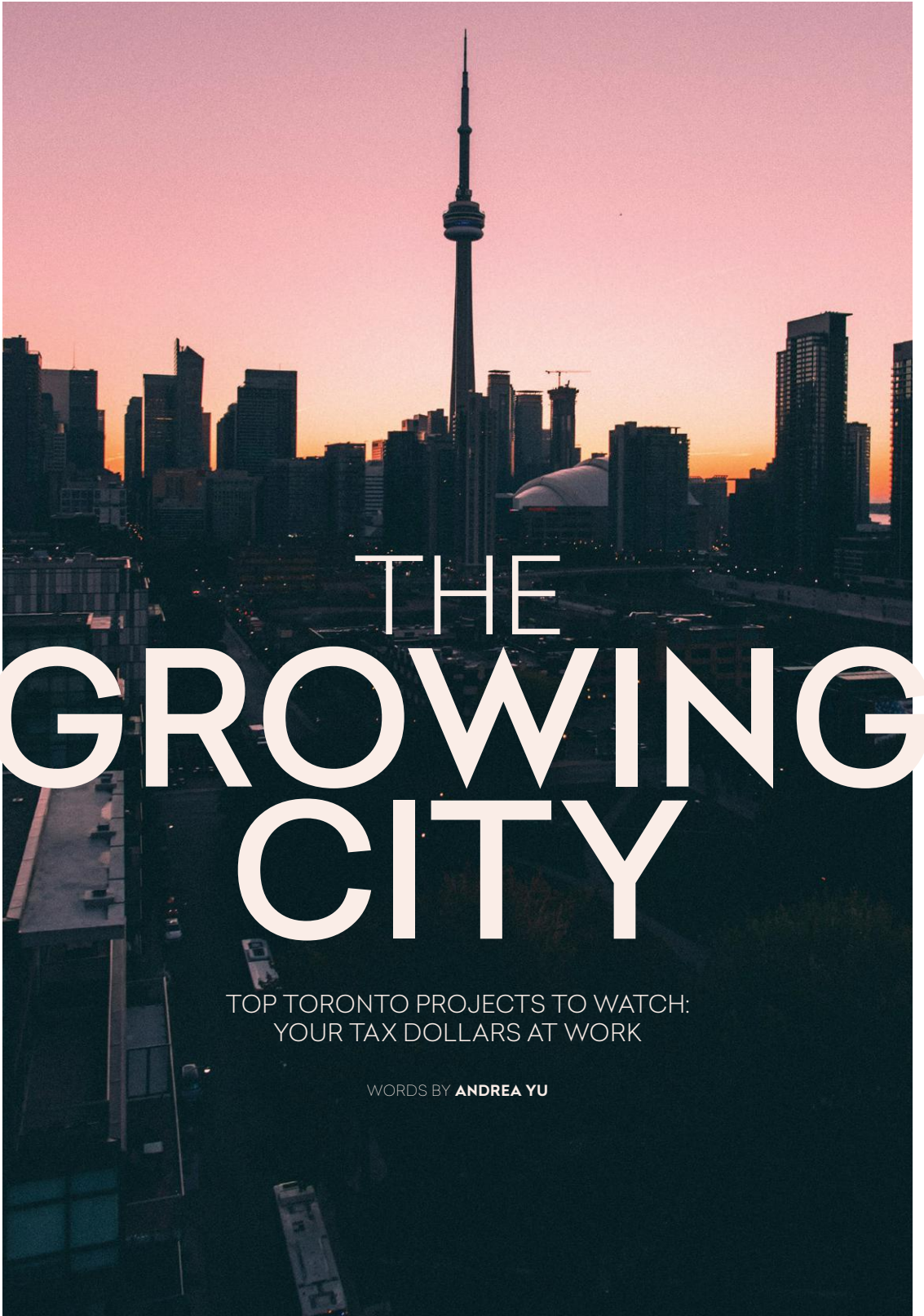
All those moves, even the ones that were tinged with sadness—the loss of childhood friends, community and familiarity; the disappointment of a failed marriage—I think of as cathartic. I moved on to new adventures.

And the spoon trick worked, just in case you’re wondering. That particular house sold in a matter of days after I buried the spoon in the garden. It had been a very happy house, and maybe part of me was psychically reluctant to let that treasured period of my life go. Who knows? Maybe I wasn’t just at the mercy of unpredictable market conditions.

I also reminded myself that while our stories and memories seem embedded in the walls of the houses we have lived in, they can become something beautiful, generous and invisible that we leave behind for the new owners, who will layer on their own stories and benefit from the happiness we had found there. 卍

ABOUT SARAH HAMPSON

For over 20 years, Sarah Hampson was a columnist for the *Globe and Mail*, where she profiled hundreds of well-known figures in business, sports, politics and the arts. She also wrote for magazines in Canada and the U.K. Hampson has been recognized for her work with numerous prestigious awards. She has written two books: a memoir, *Happily Ever After Marriage*, *A Reinvention in Mid-life*, and a children’s picture book, *Dr. Coo and the Pigeon Protest*. She splits her time between Toronto and Chester, a historic seaside village in Nova Scotia.



THE GROWING CITY

TOP TORONTO PROJECTS TO WATCH:
YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

WORDS BY **ANDREA YU**

It was an unusual year for Toronto construction projects, according to Naama Blonder, co-founder of the Toronto-based architecture and urban design firm Smart Density. “You saw way fewer developers starting their sales processes,” Blonder explains. “That dramatically affected the finances that the city was able to secure from development, which is in opposition to previous years.”

Perhaps to address the challenges related to this decline, the city has proposed a nine to 16.5 per cent increase in property taxes in 2024. It’ll be the largest increase that the city has seen in more than a decade. “We probably had it coming,” Blonder says. “We hadn’t increased our property taxes for so long, in comparison to other cities.”

Corey Hawtin, CEO of Core Development Group, points to the highly regulated housing-development market as one of the reasons for the property tax hike. “We all know that there’s a housing crisis and shortage of homes,” he says. “The Canadian housing market is one of the most regulated in the world. There’s lots of red tape, approvals take a long time and one-third of the cost of a new home goes to government taxes.” So fewer homes are built—far fewer than are needed in Toronto to accommodate our population and offer affordable housing—meaning that there are fewer homeowners to pay into the property tax pool.

THE UPSIDE OF INCREASED TAXES

Although it’s a controversial opinion, Blonder doesn’t believe that tax increases should be viewed negatively. That’s because property taxes, in part, help the city fund much-needed infrastructure, public programming and revitalization projects. These include the Ontario subway line, which will add 15 subway stops and offer an alternate connection for those northeast of the city to commute downtown. There’s also the Port Lands, an ambitious new neighbourhood of parkland, commercial space, residential homes and film studios. “Everyone is going to benefit from these investments,” Blonder says. “Toronto is an incredible city with incredible resources and

assets. If we want to become the global city that is attracting millions of people to come and call Toronto home, it needs to be at a level that has what global cities have to offer.”

Blonder has her eye on waterfront projects in particular, like the Ontario Place redevelopment, which will bring new entertainment options, parkland, waterfront access and new event venues right to the lake’s edge. “Waterfronts are the diamonds of any urban fabric, whether it’s a river, it’s a beach or it’s a lake,” she explains. But Blonder also reminds us that meaningful city development isn’t only huge, headline-making projects. Improvements such as those on Scarborough Golf Club Road, to increase pedestrian safety and add bike lanes, along with the Yonge Street Linear Park, aren’t quite as large and high-budget as the Port Lands but are still an important part of maintaining the city. “Development happens on all scales—it comes in different shapes and sizes,” Blonder says.

While these projects involve periods of construction, which closes streets and causes temporary disruptions, it’s a worthwhile payoff, as far as Blonder is concerned. “I live in a very dense area with a lot of construction. Yes, construction is unpleasant for a few years, but now I have more stores within walking distance to where I live. They also improved the sidewalk infrastructure. I’m getting a new bike lane. Development improves the neighbourhood.”

Below, we outline five projects that are upcoming or currently under construction that Torontonians can look forward to in coming years:

THE PORT LANDS

You might not have spent much time in the Port Lands, an 880-acre neighbourhood south of Lake Shore Boulevard and east of Leslie Street. That’s because there haven’t been many reasons for most people to head to this area, which was previously a port and industrial zone. But it won’t be that way for long. As one of the most ambitious urban redevelopment projects that the city has undertaken, the Port Lands area is evolving to become a coveted new destination for locals and tourists alike.

Below: Cherry Street North Bridge in the Port Lands



Take, for example, over 40 acres of new public park space. River Park will span the north and south sides of a new one-kilometre river valley created as a new outlet for the Don River, helping to prevent it from overflowing (it's part of Toronto's flood protection strategy). At this park, you'll find walking and cycling trails and picnic spots, as well as ski and snowshoe trails in the winter. The Port Lands will also have Promontory Park, along the west side of the Port Lands, with a play area, a large event lawn, a paddling cove and a cobble beach with access to the lake. Leslie Lookout Park, which opens in the summer of 2024, will feature another public beach, forested dunes and an open area for hosting pop-up events and concerts.

More than 5,000 trees, two million herbaceous plants and 77,000 shrubs will be planted in the Port Lands, all selected for their tolerance of urban conditions (like high pedestrian traffic and salt spray from roads) and ability to withstand changing water levels. The new greenery will also serve as a quality habitat for wildlife. With coastal wetlands and meadows, the new parks will be an excellent place for birdwatching (don't forget your binoculars). A set of sleek new bridges have already been introduced to the area, to help pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and a future light rail transit extension reach the area.

Another highlight of the project is on Villiers Island, spanning 54 acres at the east end of the Port Lands, which will become a place for housing, including affordable homes and family-friendly layouts (20 per cent of the land will be set aside for affordable rental units). Adding to that is the 50-acre McCleary District, which will be a denser, more transit-oriented community with mid-rise buildings. Construction of residential zones will begin after the flood protection work is completed.

The Port Lands will also be a place for work. It's expected that 6,600 jobs will be created throughout the Port Lands, in over 700,000 square feet of film studio and production space and 1,300,000 square feet of new commercial space.

ONTARIO SUBWAY LINE

Getting from A to B using the city's existing public transit network isn't always an easy feat, especially if you're commuting during rush hour. But a new, long-awaited subway line is currently under construction to increase options for people to get around. The Ontario Line will be a 15.6-kilometre subway line adding 15 new

stations to the city's network, running from Exhibition Place through the downtown core before winding north to the current location of the Ontario Science Centre. A journey from end to end should take under 30 minutes, compared to the 70 minutes it takes on the transit routes that currently exist.

The Ontario Line will be composed of several segments, some sharing existing track lines with GO trains, new underground segments and a new elevated section. At Ontario Science Centre, it will connect passengers to the new Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and at Exhibition Place, passengers can easily hop on the GO's Lakeshore West line. There will also be connections to the TTC's Line 1 and Line 2, at Osgoode and Queen stations, as well as at Pape on Line 2, along with connections to streetcar lines from 10 Ontario Line stations. By 2041, 388,000 trips a day are expected to take place on the Ontario Line. And even if you don't live near a future station, you'll still benefit as a transit commuter. After it's up and running, the Ontario Line is expected to alleviate congestion at some of the city's busiest stations—by up to 22 per cent at Bloor/Yonge Station (or 14,000 fewer people during the busiest hour) and by up to 14 per cent at Union Station.



Above: James Canning Gardens, part of Yonge Street Linear Park

YONGE STREET LINEAR PARK

When construction happens around Yonge and Bloor, it's usually related to a high-rise condo or retail space. That's what makes the Yonge Street Linear Park an unusual, but welcome project for the neighbourhood. The four parks that comprise this revitalization project—James Canning Gardens, George Hislop Park, Norman Jewison Park and the Alexander Street Parkette—used to be neglected spaces with poor lighting, overgrown vegetation and minimal seating. Planners saw that these parks had the potential to become a "green spine" downtown, offering an alternative walking route just east of Yonge Street, running south from Charles Street to Dundonald Street.

Construction began on the Yonge Street Linear Park in May 2023 and is ongoing. Fifteen-foot-high Corten steel

Yonge Street Linear Park; Photo: Michael Mur, Landscape Architect; Janet Rosenberg & Studio

“IT’S A SPACE POISED TO BECOME A NEIGHBOURHOOD GATHERING PLACE FOR AFTERNOON STROLLS, DOG WALKS AND CHILDREN’S PLAY”

archways create a path through the four parks—they’re also lit to illuminate the journey at night. A playground, on a porous surface, will have new elements for accessible play, balancing and climbing. Designed to be elevated above tree roots, the park’s design helps to preserve the mature honey locust trees that already grow in the area.

Custom precast concrete stools dotted throughout the park offer spots to sit and enjoy a coffee or chat with a friend. Circular raised planters, also made of Corten steel, mirror the material used in the park’s archways and will be filled with hardy perennials. Given the park’s location in the Church and Wellesley area, Canada’s largest 2SLGBTQ+ neighbourhood, the parks will also boast public artworks from 2SLGBTQ+ artists, as well as from Indigenous artists. It’s a space poised to become a neighbourhood gathering place for afternoon strolls, dog walks and children’s play.

SCARBOROUGH GOLF CLUB ROAD

Poor road conditions along Scarborough Golf Club Road, from Ellesmere Road to Kingston Road, have prompted the city to give this stretch a much-needed facelift. The new changes will improve safety by reducing vehicle travel speeds, lessening the chances of pedestrian injury and death (it’s a grim statistic, but 15 people have been killed or seriously injured along Scarborough Golf Club Road since 2010). It’s all part of Toronto’s Vision Zero Road Safety Plan to reduce traffic-related fatalities and injuries on the city’s streets.

Bike lanes will also be installed along Scarborough Golf Club Road expanding bike networks in the city’s east end by connecting existing lanes (the Brimorton Bike Lanes, Ellesmere Road Multi-Use Trail and the Gatineau Trail), which were previously unlinked. The new bike lanes will also help Toronto achieve its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In general, expect improvements like new pedestrian crossings and a reduction in motor vehicle lanes and street parking. Parking will either be limited to one side of the street instead of both sides or will be removed altogether on some stretches of the road. There will also be raised intersections and painted corners, which increase the turning radii (and, consequently, reduce the speed) of turning vehicles.

ONTARIO PLACE

A hotly debated project, the redevelopment of Ontario Place is still being contested by political opposition groups. But, as of publishing, the current plans are to transform this site of a former theme park into an area for family-friendly entertainment, event spaces, parks and music venues, along with public waterfront access. The major additions to Ontario Place are Therme, a wellness waterpark and spa with pools and waterslides, the relocation of the Ontario Science Centre and a renovated amphitheatre run by Live Nation that will be able to host year-round events.

The redevelopment will retain and incorporate some of Ontario Place’s revered elements, such as the Cinesphere and the Pod complex. More recent additions to Ontario Place, such as Trillium Park and the William G. Davis Trail, will also remain, with tons of new park spaces and greenery joining it. The trail will be expanded to run along the entire shoreline of Ontario Place, while a public beach will replace the rocky swimming cove that’s currently there. Picnic spaces and playgrounds will also be added, along with kayak and canoe rental facilities. In the winter, the rink will make Ontario Place an ice-skating destination. ❄️

PROPERTY TAXES OVER THE YEARS

YEAR	RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX RATE	PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM PRIOR YEAR
2014	0.508666	N/A
2015	0.496932	- 0.023
2016	0.490651	-0.013
2017	0.470875	-0.04
2018	0.453709	-0.037
2019	0.440339	-0.029
2020	0.431598	-0.02
2021	0.451291	0.046
2022	0.472052	0.046
2023	0.506079	0.072
2024	0.554157	0.095



Beyond Borders

CANADIAN
IMMIGRATION
INSIGHTS
AND WHY
THE GTA IS
CONSIDERED
A TOP
LOCATION FOR
NEWCOMERS

WORDS BY **ALI AMAD**

CANADA HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPED BY IMMIGRANTS since Confederation in 1867. Millions of people have come from all over the world and embraced Canada as their home, transforming it into a country that draws its strength from its diversity. This legacy of multiculturalism continues as Canada welcomes record numbers of immigrants each year—between 2016 and 2021, more than 1.3 million immigrants settled permanently in Canada. Today, nearly a quarter of Canada’s population is made up of immigrants, and that percentage is growing. By 2036, immigrants will comprise up to 30 per cent of Canadians.

As Canada’s largest city, Toronto is a major epicentre for immigration, with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) welcoming nearly 160,000 newcomers in 2022 alone—a 103 per cent increase from the previous year. One of those newcomers was Ettore Cristofaro, a 26-year-old high school math teacher who made the move from Apricena, a tiny town in the southeastern Italian region of Apulia. With a population of 13,000 people and year-round sunny weather, sleepy and tranquil Apricena was a stark contrast to the GTA, with its six million residents and long, dark winters. “But I always wanted to know what it would be like to live abroad and Canada was my number one choice,” says Cristofaro, who also had aspirations to use his math background to start a career in data analysis.

WHY TORONTO?

Two years earlier, a childhood friend had made the move to the GTA. She convinced Cristofaro to join her with a straightforward proposition: more educational and job opportunities and better salaries, all within one of the most exciting and inclusive cultural mosaics in the world (after all, 190 languages are spoken in Toronto, and more than half of the city’s population was born in another country). Serving as Canada’s financial and business hub, the city boasts the second-largest financial services centre in North America, luring in global giants like Google, Microsoft and Uber, as well as local success stories such as Ada, Wealhsimple and Wattpad.

The GTA also offers an exceptional quality of life, with highly rated educational institutions, 15 Michelin-starred restaurants, cultural landmarks like the Royal Ontario Museum and more than 1,600 parks dotting the urban landscape. Unsurprisingly, Toronto has solidified its position as a premier immigration destination, drawing individuals seeking careers in virtually every field, including technology, green energy, fashion, design, and music and film production. This reputation has helped Toronto skyrocket in rankings of the world’s best cities. In 2023, Toronto came in ninth in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s annual Global Liveability Index—with top marks for stability, health care and education.

HOW NEWCOMERS COME TO CANADA

Put simply, one of the keys to Toronto’s success on these fronts is its ability to seamlessly integrate the constant flow of new arrivals. “Newcomers can

IT WON'T GO QUIETLY

JAGUAR

F-TYPE



find communities and support networks that share their cultural background,” says Samina Sami, CEO of Costi, a Toronto-area immigrant services organization that supported more than 39,000 newcomers last year. “Ethno-specific retailers and other businesses further facilitate their transition into a new country, fostering a sense of familiarity that makes the move easier.”

The most common pathway for newcomers is through Canada’s economic immigration programs. Under the federal Express Entry system, skilled worker applicants receive points ranking them on their education, skills, experience and language proficiency. Top-ranked individuals receive invitations to apply for permanent residence through three programs: the Federal Skilled Worker Program, the Federal Skilled Trades Program, and the Canadian Experience Class for skilled workers with prior experience in the country.

People keen on moving to Canada can also apply through provincial immigrant nominee programs (available in all provinces except Quebec, which has its own special skilled worker program). Each province selects specific skill criteria for its program, based on its individual needs. For those aiming to move to Toronto, Ontario’s Immigrant Nominee Program offers nine different immigration streams that include opportunities for several types of skilled foreign workers, as well as for international students with master’s degrees and PhDs earned in Ontario.

Other immigration options include sponsorship: Canadian citizens and permanent residents can sponsor family members to join them, including spouses and children,

common-law partners, parents and grandparents. Along with special initiatives for athletes and artists, as well as in-demand workers like family caregivers and farmers, Canada even has programs to resettle refugees from across the world. “Canada’s immigration policies constantly evolve to meet economic needs and global trends,” says Sami. For example, Costi helped settle some of the 166,000 Ukrainians who have moved to Canada since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began in March 2022, through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel.

HOW IMMIGRATION IS CHANGING

To help meet the Canadian government’s goals of bringing in nearly 1.5 million immigrants in the next three years, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is overhauling its organizational structure so that it better aligns with corporate business models. While this new model aims to maximize efficiency and shorten application wait times, the IRCC also plans on implementing a state-of-the-art digital platform to further streamline the immigration process. “Governments on the provincial and federal level have also committed to more affordable housing and accelerating these plans will help support settlement of newcomers,” adds Sami.

As a top education destination that hosts more than 800,000 international students a year, Canada offers students visas that allow them to also gain work experience before graduation. After careful consideration of his options, this was Cristofaro’s preferred pathway. When he was accepted to Toronto’s Humber College for its Research Analyst graduate certificate program, he officially made the move in early 2022.

Aside from those cold winters, adapting to life in Toronto for international students like Cristofaro, as well as immigrant families and refugees, is not without its challenges. “Accessing support can be challenging for newcomers who are unfamiliar with Canadian systems,” says Sami. Newcomers may encounter difficulties with Canadian employers not recognizing their foreign credentials, and others need assistance with learning English and enrolling their children in school and daycare.

That’s where settlement agencies like the FCJ Refugee Centre, Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services and Sami’s Costi come in. “We offer a variety of programs, including language training, employment services, housing support and family services, which can all affect the experiences and outcomes of newcomers,” says Sami. Settlement agencies also help newcomers navigate the GTA housing market and provide them with information on everything from tenant rights to housing subsidies. “We cannot ignore the fact that there is a housing crisis in the GTA,” says Sami. “This presents a significant challenge for newcomers due to rising prices and limited availability.”

“Because of the higher cost of living in Toronto, my main worry was whether I could be economically independent here,” says Cristofaro. But with the ability to speak both Italian and English, he managed to get part-time work as a math tutor and in customer service at a Yorkville gelateria. “What I noticed right away from my job experiences is that Toronto operates with a meritocracy,”

“CANADA’S
IMMIGRATION
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AND GLOBAL
TRENDS.”



Samina Sami,
CEO of Costi

he says. “If you use your skill set and have a willingness to learn and look for opportunities, your efforts will be recognized and rewarded.”

Cristofaro has barely kept up with a schedule that was chock-full with work and school, but he has also had to acclimate himself to the more hectic pace of life in Toronto compared to the laid-back atmosphere in his hometown of Apricena. “In Europe, the lifestyle is also not as focused on work and it’s more community-driven compared to Canada,” he says. “I really had to change my mentality because, of course, everything has pros and cons. After some time, I started appreciating the value of prioritizing work and focusing on self-improvement.”

Now 28, Cristofaro has fully settled in as a Torontonian: in November 2022, Cristofaro secured a contract job as a data analyst for Ontario’s Ministry of Education and he’s been there ever since. A passionate soccer player and lover of Italian food, Cristofaro has also discovered reminders of home by playing in local soccer leagues and dining at Eataly, the wildly popular Italian market and food hall in Yorkville. “They have the best pizza in the city—no argument,” he says. Currently in Canada with a work permit, he’s hoping to obtain a full-time position in data analysis so he can apply for permanent residency. “Coming here has given me the chance to meet people from so many different cultures and there’s still a lot I want to learn about all of them,” he says. “I’m now sure I’ve found my new home.” 🇨🇦

FAST FACTS ABOUT

Opportunities for New Canadians in the GTA

TECH CENTRAL

Toronto is the third-largest tech hub in North America—trailing only New York and Silicon Valley. In life sciences alone, nearly 40,000 Torontonians work in fields that draw on medical research and biotechnology. The GTA also has the highest concentration of AI firms worldwide, such as Deep Genomics and Uber’s self-driving car research lab. Many of these opportunities can be found in the city’s tech clusters, like the MaRS Discovery District, which spans seven million square feet of hospitals, research institutes, venture capital firms and much more.

START-UP HEAVEN

With access to Canada’s largest start-up ecosystem, small business owners can obtain funding and strategic partnerships from more than 80 sector-specific incubators and accelerators. Additionally, through Canada’s Start-Up Visa Program, immigrant entrepreneurs and innovators can apply for permanent residence by pitching their ventures and demonstrating their positive contributions to the economy.

LIVE AND LEARN

International students can explore every possible career avenue in the GTA’s five public universities and more than 140 private career colleges. Many educational institutions also boast facilities like York University’s Centre for Vision Research, Humber College’s Barrett Centre for Technology Innovation and George Brown College’s Food Innovation and Research Studio. Once they get their degrees, international students have the opportunity to apply for a post-graduation work permit, which allows them to work in Canada for up to three additional years.

EXPERIENCE CANADA

In 2024, Canada is inviting nearly 90,000 young people between 18 and 35—from more than 35 countries and territories worldwide—to work and travel through the International Experience Canada program.

MOVIE MAGIC

Ample opportunities for filmmakers and animators can be found in Toronto, home to a burgeoning film and television production industry and the Toronto International Film Festival, the second-biggest pit stop on the festival circuit after Cannes. Artists can also hone their craft at world-renowned institutions like Sheridan College’s animation program, whose alumni include Oscar-winner Domee Shi, director of Pixar’s 2022 set-in-Toronto film, *Turning Red*.



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↑ Above:
Aga Khan Museum

LOCAL LOVE

DISCOVER HIDDEN
GEMS THAT WILL
HAVE YOU HEAD
OVER HEELS FOR
TORONTO AGAIN

WORDS BY **STEPHANIE MATAS**

With the monotony of daily life and the addition of grey winter skies, it's easy to forget just how extraordinary Toronto really is. Now's the time to explore our city anew by checking out some of its best-kept secrets.

FOR ART ENTHUSIASTS

"Night in the Garden of Love," Aga Khan Museum, 77 Wynford Dr.

This new exhibit at one of the city's most underrated museums is a dynamic, multi-sensory experience inspired by African-American Muslim musician, composer and polymath Dr. Yusef Lateef. Explore the garden of love through virtual reality, textiles, music, scent and digital plants that sway in harmony until May 5.

"Sculpture: Remembered Sustenance," Metro Hall 55 John St.

You may have seen this collection of bronze animals in passing but how often have you stopped to consider it? This impressive collection of 19 sculptures by Cynthia Short recalls memories of childhood that remain with us throughout our lives. The group of cartoon-like creatures appears to be crossing the lawn, then moving away from a curtain drawn by two birds. Below the curtain, a plate

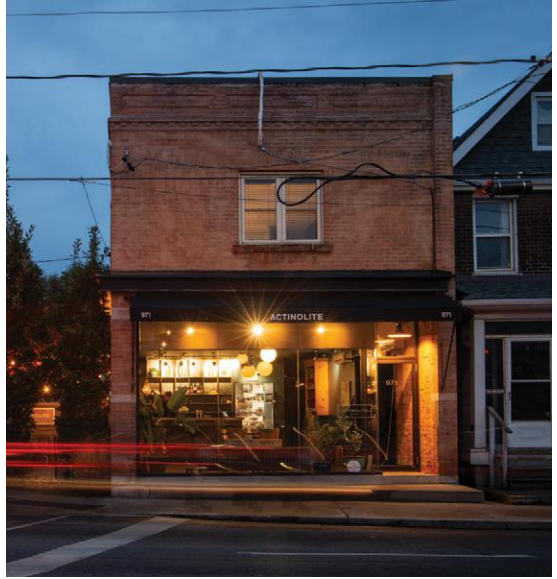
set in the ground holds a negative impression of a small ballerina, the kind often found in a child's music box. Inviting a range of interpretations and potential meanings, the work is primarily intended to excite and intrigue children.

Cooper Cole Gallery, 1134 Dupont St. and 1136 Dupont St.

Walk in or call ahead to book an appointment at this intimate gallery that holds exhibitions by local artists in an unpretentious space. Its current exhibition "Gravity Model," on until March 2, delves into the complexities of transition, capturing the essence of change in our lives through the lens of eight distinguished artists. The next exhibitions start on March 22.

Artscape Youngplace, 180 Shaw St.

Once a school, this cultural hub is devoted to the arts, education and establishing community connections, located in a gorgeous 100-year-old building. Wander three floors of unique only-in-Toronto artwork and exhibits that parallel the vibrancy of the nearby Queen West neighbourhood. It's open seven days a week and free to the public.



↑ Above: Actinolite



FOR UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Winter Stations, East Beaches

Packed with sunbathers, swimmers and picnickers all summer, the beach becomes a quiet spot for walking the dog or going for an icy plunge when temperatures drop. Winter Stations bring some art and foot traffic to the area. This little-known project runs in the city's east-end beaches from February 19 to March 31. This year's interactive art installations include: *We Caught a UFO!*, which lifts viewers above ground, transporting them to a new world; *A Kaleidoscopic Odyssey*, which challenges where reality ends and imagination begins; *Make Waves*, a whimsical furniture piece that represents how simple actions can ripple outward, resonating in time and space; and *Nova*, a star that has crashed on top of a lifeguard station, illuminating Woodbine Beach.

↑ Above: *Nova*, Winter Stations

TIFF Secret Movie Club, TIFF Lightbox, 350 King St. W.

While maybe not quite as secret as the name would imply, this club allows movie fans to see the year's hottest flicks, from noteworthy festival films and fan favourites to the most highly anticipated movies and small-budget indies. The titles are kept under wraps (they are previews of films not yet released in theatres) so you're in for a sweet surprise at every screening. There's also a lively discussion with a member of the film team after each viewing, so you can ask any unanswered questions.

k.Dinners, 150 Gainsborough Rd.

Chef Ken Yau's ultra-exclusive interactive supper club takes you on a sensory journey where playing with your food is highly encouraged. The 10-course, tactile dinners are served inside an intimate 700-square-foot studio space, and as the seasons and Yau's experiences change, so do the fun and innovative dishes.

Siamese Connection, Undisclosed

Accessed through a laneway or via a secret door off Yonge Street, this secret speakeasy is located in an old bank vault filled with a vintage furniture collection. If you can find it, you can request membership or be invited to exclusive private dinners by an acclaimed chef, but there's already a long wait-list.

Winter Stations: Courtesy of Winter Stations; Actinolite: Courtesy of Actinolite

FOR COZY DINING

À Toi, 214 King St. W.

Venture beyond the champagne display at Coffee, Oysters, Champagne on King Street West and into another time. Find the secret door and discover a 1920s-style hotel lobby bar. Said to be a gift to the City of Toronto by French millionaire Antoine Mercier, it's a sophisticated space to indulge in playful champagne shooters and caviar bumps prepared by chef de cuisine Olivia Seymour, or take a ride on the gorgeous carousel.

Actinolite, 971 Ossington Ave.

This unassuming neighbourhood spot has been selected by Michelin and recognized as one of Canada's top 100 restaurants. Excellent ingredients take centre stage in every dish, whether fresh-caught fish, beef-cheek goulash or warm sourdough served with homemade charcuterie, and its unscripted, ever-evolving tasting menu is always unique and inventive. Settle in for a warm and memorable evening during its bonfire dinner series, held right in its backyard, where the chef often prepares part of your meal over an open flame before your eyes.

Tiny Market Co., 938 Bathurst St.

Cozy up with friends and loved ones in an intimate, casual environment while enjoying a seven-course seasonal tasting menu—and homemade pasta is the star. Current features on offer include house-made focaccia and marinated olives, bucatini tossed in saffron butter, and scarpinocc pasta filled with roasted sunchoke, caramelized fennel and mascarpone in Gruyère cream. Only 10 to 14 seats are available per night, or you can host a private gathering of up to 12.

FOR GETTING LOST IN NATURE

High Park Nature Centre, 375 Colborne Lodge Dr.

Open green space, hiking trails, playgrounds, a zoo and (of course) the cherry blossoms are some of the many reasons thousands of visitors flock to High Park each day. But nestled off the beaten track is the High Park Nature Centre, which hosts free nature-themed crafts, activities and treasure hunts perfect for little ones and the young at heart. Its clubs and camps connect you with the natural surroundings in High Park through songs, hikes and engaging active play.

Corktown Common, 155 Bayview Ave.

Embark on a journey into nature without leaving the city at this sprawling park at the foot of Lower River Street and Bayview Avenue. Featuring expansive lawns, walking trails, a splash pad and a fire pit, it's a masterful collision of green and industrial space. On one side, there's a busy highway, on the other, a family-friendly community playground and a marsh home to a diverse range of habitats to support its growing population of birds, amphibians and insects.

Secret Beach Toronto, Undisclosed

This secluded pebble beach is the perfect way to escape the downtown core. Walk along the R.C. Harris Water Treatment Plant fence until you find a gate, then hike carefully down the hill. Though it's just a short distance from the busy east-end beaches, the area is relatively remote, which is ideal for sun-soaked lounging without all the foot traffic. Wander the nearby 3.9-kilometre looped trail and watch the Scarborough Bluffs gradually emerge as you progress along beach sand and gravel paths.

Scarborough Bluffs, 1 Brimley Rd. S., Bluffers Park Rd.

While Woodbine, Kew and Balmy Beach tend to get all the glory, the Scarborough Bluffs are a natural wonder that many Torontonians miss. Plus, beyond the well-known sites at Bluffer's Park, you'll find a small stretch of serene sand. To find it, head to the northwest corner of the first parking lot on the right, and follow a dirt path to arrive at one of the most secluded spots on the waterfront.

Lost River Walks, Ashbridges Bay, Corktown Common and Parkdale

Explore the lost streams and waterways buried by urban development in Toronto on a self-guided tour of Ashbridges Bay, Corktown Common and Parkdale. Crafted by Peter Hare, explore online field guides that feature interactive maps with clickable points indicating the current water locations and the paths of the lost rivers. You'll gain a new understanding of the city's new framework, ecosystems and watersheds. 🏞️

Below:
Scarborough
Bluffs
↓





Gillian Gillies, principal of her eponymous design firm in Toronto



THE ART OF

FRICITIONLESS LIVING

DISCOVER HOW
THOUGHTFUL
DESIGN CHOICES ARE
TRANSFORMING HOMES
INTO HEALTH-BOOSTING
SANCTUARIES

WORDS BY **LISA VAN DE GEYN**

If the past few years have taught us anything, it's the importance of prioritizing our well-being. And we're not just talking about work-life balance here—we're referring to ensuring our homes feel and function like sanctuaries, making them havens from the noise in our busy, overstimulated world. What started as a call to organize, declutter and purge for the sake of our mental health (getting rid of what doesn't spark joy, à la Marie Kondo) has matured into a broader idea centring around simplicity and overall wellness. Architects and interior designers are already seeing this shift with clients. While incorporating lavish home upgrades was once all the rage, homeowners are becoming less interested in home theatres, upgraded garages and cigar lounges. Instead, they're opting for what makes their lives easier, happier and more comfortable.

Gillian Gillies, the principal of her eponymous design firm in Toronto, calls this phenomenon frictionless living, and it's all about eliminating needless stress and

Left: Interior by Gillian Gillies Design

distractions in our homes so we can better focus on what matters to us most. “The phrase accurately describes what most people want in their homes—and in their lives. It refers to living with more ease, flow and harmony, and it encourages us to prioritize our time and energy so we can spend more of it doing the things we love and less of it on mundane tasks,” she says. “The pandemic had us rethinking our homes. Instead of designing for our guests or having spaces that were only used on special occasions, we took a deeper look into how to make our spaces work for ourselves and our daily needs.”

The mere idea of frictionless living was so alluring for Edilka Anderson, a design consultant and partner of Interiors and Impressions (which services the Greater Toronto Area), that it led her to leave the bustle of downtown Toronto for Guelph, Ontario. “Transitioning to a quieter city was a deliberate choice driven by my desire for enhanced well-being and lifestyle adjustments. My motivation was centred around providing my family with more opportunities for outdoor activities and nature walks, fostering an environment where we didn’t feel the constant need to be connected,” she says. “The move really allowed me to recalibrate, re-evaluate and better manage my time, ultimately affording my family more quality moments together.”

This need for change extended to the design of her custom-built home—she was purposeful about flow and functionality, making ease of movement and harmony her primary focus. “I demonstrated this approach by forgoing the conventional theatre room, which is a common choice

among many of my neighbours. Instead, I designed a versatile space that serves many functions—it’s a family room where we watch TV, an art studio for my kids and a designated yoga area I use.” It was also important for Anderson to incorporate expansive floor-to-ceiling windows to capture the views of trees and foliage outside and allow for natural light to pour into the space. Her home defines the way she sees frictionless living in the context of interior design—it minimizes disruptions and lets her family effortlessly and efficiently navigate their space, giving them a smoother, more streamlined experience while at home.

The demand for this more mindful way of living is growing, driving architects and designers to propose clever, innovative upgrades that cultivate and elevate frictionless living. “These enhancements cater to a homeowner’s desire for a sophisticated, wellness-focused environment, providing both functional and experiential benefits,” Anderson says. Adds Gillies: “It’s about an intentional and purposeful lifestyle that allows you to achieve your goals and live a happier, more fulfilling life.”

HOW TO EMBRACE FRICTIONLESS LIVING

If you’re considering jumping on the bandwagon in search of more peace and positivity in your own home, we’re with you. From simple changes you can implement now to investment projects that require planning, here’s what the design experts told us about how to integrate this way of life into your abode.

INVEST IN A HOME SPA

“There’s been a huge shift in creating spas at home, something we’re very happy to embrace,” Gillies says. More homeowners are choosing to invest in upgrades like infrared saunas and cold-plunge pools, for example, to reap not just the mental benefits, but the physical advantages too—saunas have been shown to help with detoxification and promote better sleep, while cold plunges can relieve sore muscles and may decrease painful inflammation. “Giving yourself a space to unwind and rejuvenate can be a great investment in your health and wellness,” she says. Anderson has also been designing luxurious home spas with high-end amenities, like steam rooms and hydrotherapy tubs, to offer clients the full spa experience. “These dedicated spaces for relaxation and rejuvenation contribute to wellness,” says Anderson.

INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY

Anderson says a significant element in frictionless living is building technology into design to enhance convenience. Smart home technology isn’t just trendy—it’s, well, smart. Connecting our devices via voice commands or apps saves time and energy, fosters relaxation and enhances productivity. “Consider smart automation for lighting, temperature control and indoor air-quality systems to create a technologically advanced yet user-friendly living space,” she says. (Air quality is especially important

here—smart air monitors and purifiers benefit our respiratory health, which is helpful for people who suffer from asthma and allergies. More about this below.)

Homeowners who already embrace these smart home technologies are incorporating even newer innovations into their spaces. Smart workout tech and smart trainers for home gyms are also gaining popularity, as are smart toilets that come with heated seats, as well as the ability to cleanse, dry and deodorize. Some researchers are even looking at toilets that can detect disease by analyzing waste—an intriguing development for those who have a genetic predisposition to certain diseases. And for folks who could use a better night's sleep, smart mattress toppers allow you to warm and cool your bed—or just your side of a shared bed—using your phone.

PURIFY YOUR AIR AND WATER

The desire to keep our air clean at home was strengthened during the pandemic, with portable air purifiers flying off store shelves. Advanced air-filtration systems that filter out viruses, allergens and other pollutants can be installed to improve air quality throughout the entire home. Your home's

ventilation system can also be upgraded—installing energy-recovery ventilators in your home's forced-air system lets fresh air in from outdoors and gets rid of stale air circulating indoors.

If you're going to drink enough water each day, it's key to ensure you're consuming good-quality water. High-end water-purification systems not only improve the taste of what you're drinking, but

they remove contaminants (for example, sediments, lead, chlorine) from every water source in the home—including your showers and sinks.

SLEEP PEACEFULLY

“A great night's sleep is something most of us crave, and designers can help,” Gillies says. Getting enough shut-eye is imperative to wellness, and it all starts with making sure our bedrooms are comfortable and conducive to rest. “Start with a well-insulated space that removes external noise; get black-out window coverings to provide a cocoon-like feeling; tailor your mattress and bed linens to your ideal temperature; and install an air-filtration system to reduce pollutants, which will minimize snoring and maximize sleep quality.”

PRIORITIZE LIGHTING

We used to think smart lighting was just about using more energy-efficient, cost-effective bulbs. Then we embraced being able to tap our phones to turn our lights on and off from pretty much anywhere, and what a breakthrough that was. While these are definitely conveniences, the real game-changer is the ability to adjust the colour and intensity of our lights to mimic sunlight, which benefits our circadian rhythm and impacts our mood and sleep. You can start your day with your lights set at a lower brightness (the way the sun appears when it's rising), increase it through the day, and then lower it again in the evening to mimic the sunset.

The way colour works isn't as straightforward—there's a bit of science to understand. The correlated colour temperature (CCT) tells us how much warmth or coolness is emitted from LED bulbs, and it can be adjusted through smartphone apps. (The CCT is measured using the Kelvin scale; for reference, the sun is around 5,000 K.)

Residential lighting is generally between 2,500 K and 5,000 K, and using this technology allows you to maintain warmer light (around 2,500 K) in cozier rooms like the bedroom and living room, and brighter white light (about 4,000 K) in home offices and kitchens to boost alertness and productivity.

ADOPT BIOPHILIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Biophilia comes from the Greek, meaning “love of living things.” So biophilic design allows us to connect with nature on a regular basis, as opposed to those fleeting moments we get, like when we walk our dogs around the block. “You can bring nature indoors by incorporating plants and natural materials. Not only do they add visual interest, but they also contribute to improved air quality and a sense of well-being,” Anderson says.

There are a plethora of benefits to owning indoor leafy plants—studies have shown it takes only 15 or 20 minutes in a room with houseplants to reap the advantages, which include feeling less stressed, and feeling happier, more energized and positive. Installing living green walls (or vertical gardens) with self-watering systems in well-lit areas is a great way to immerse yourself in foliage without taking up any valuable square footage. (They also absorb noise, which is a bonus.)





Above: Smart LED lighting

It's also recommended to bring in as many natural materials as possible into your space. Think wood, bamboo and cork, for example—are all durable, versatile, sustainable options that work beautifully for flooring, wall panelling, furniture and decor accessories.

RETREAT IN YOUR ENSUITE

A leaky shower was the catalyst behind a recent ensuite renovation Gillies designed for a client, but they had been considering the overhaul for several years. "There was the need to create a very special place, a sanctuary. So, we stripped the room back to its core and

we relocated the vanity and bathtub," she says. "We created a large double vanity and a makeup area near the large floor-length window. The vanity has multiple layers of lighting that allow the homeowner to create different moods in the space. Lighting is key." To enhance her client's sense of ease and calm, Gillies opted for a Japanese-style tub—with a heated backrest, water jets and chromotherapy (a holistic treatment that can alter mood and possibly help decrease physical pain)—that allows the bather to be seated in water that's shoulder height. "The shower has an oversized rain head that also features chromotherapy and has multiple functions—it makes you feel like you're standing under a waterfall," she says. "To top off all this beauty is a ceiling tray with a bespoke de Gournay hand-painted wallpaper in cherry blossoms. The windows are draped with a contemporary lace from Italy, and the bathtub is positioned with views that overlook their private deck. It's quite the ensuite."

REVEL IN PEACE AND QUIET

Toronto is one of the noisiest cities in the country, and most of us are so used to noise pollution (unwanted or excessive sounds that affect our health and quality of life) that we don't even realize we're constantly surrounded by it. From the incessant sound of cars driving by and horns honking to the racket made by construction, air traffic and even barking dogs, the effects of these pollutants can cause noise-induced hearing loss, headaches, high blood pressure, respiratory issues, stress and

anxiety, depression and insomnia. Soundproofing promotes relaxation and focus and helps you sleep more peacefully. "Adding insulation to walls, ceilings and floors can help reduce outside noise and create a quieter environment inside the home," says Gillies. "Acoustic panels can also be installed on walls to absorb sound and reduce echoes for a quieter life at home. This way, if someone in the family wants to work out while someone else is meditating and another is playing guitar, everyone can do their own thing without bothering anyone else."

INTRODUCE ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics isn't just a buzzword in workplaces—it's actually about the way we interact with our environments. We all know how much more comfortable it is to sit at our computers in an ergonomic office chair that supports our spines and reduces stress on our necks, but few of us consider ergonomic furniture for our homes. "Prioritize comfort in your choice of furnishings by investing in ergonomic and cozy seating options, soft textiles and plush rugs to create a snug and inviting atmosphere," says Anderson. Ergonomic sofas, recliners and loungers,



Above: IKEA
DAJLIEN bamboo
workout bench

for example, are designed to support the head, waist and back; they promote healthy posture. Some have removable headrests to help prevent neck pain; and high-density foam cushions offer extra comfort. “Movable furniture and flexible layout options are also ideal to accommodate needs and preferences,” she says.

CONSTRUCT PLAY SPACES

Kids also need a place to unwind, release energy and get creative. Dedicated playrooms are ideal for parents (keeping toys and games organized in one place is unrivalled when it comes to keeping clutter at

bay), but they’re also valuable for children. “It provides a designated space to play and explore, allowing them to develop their imaginations and creativity,” says Gillies, who says she’s designed diverse playrooms that have arts-and-crafts stations, hanging bars and even climbing walls for little ones. Play gyms, a stage (for tots who enjoy performing), reading nooks, hideaways (complete with tiny doors) and indoor slides encourage movement, boost ingenuity and add whimsy.

EMBRACE MINIMALISM

“In my world, selecting furniture and accessories is a mindful process, driven by a desire to keep only those items that truly add value to the space,” says Anderson. “I find joy in creating environments where every item has its place, contributing not just to the overall design aesthetic, but also enhancing the functionality of the space.” One way to embrace minimalism and increase functionality is to opt for furniture and accessories that do double duty. For example, if one of your wellness goals is to exercise in a serene, airy space (without bulky, not-so-aesthetic machines), IKEA’s new limited-edition Dajlien collection features pretty workout equipment that doubles as understated decor that will seamlessly blend into your space. In calming, happy shades of bright yellow and mint green, all 19 pieces are meant to feel welcoming and their compact size is ideal for smaller spaces. Must-have items are the bamboo workout bench with a removable pad and it has ample storage underneath

where you can store shoes and other gear; the valet stand, which has an artistic look and is convenient for hanging towels; and the round training weights that can easily be incorporated into the room’s design when you’re not working out.

USE YOUR LANEWAY

Many city dwellers build laneway houses on their properties to use as rental homes or guest suites, but making the investment and building one for personal use can give you a private, separate space to take a load off, engage in hobbies and focus on wellness. “These can be tailored to individual needs and could include a meditation room with soundproofing and ambient lighting, a fitness room equipped with the latest exercise technology, or a dedicated massage and relaxation area,” says Anderson. (As we all know, meditation, yoga, tai chi and other practices that involve breathing and deliberate movement have been proven to reduce stress, ease pain and enhance mood.) “Customized rooms cater to specific wellness goals, enhancing your experience.” 卍



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WHEN LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT GETS A STORYBOOK ENDING

38 ROSE PARK DRIVE: A HEAPS ESTRIN SUCCESS STORY

WORDS BY JANE MCIVER

When Gillian Bogden first laid eyes on 38 Rose Park Drive more than 25 years ago, the red-brick classic nestled in the heart of Moore Park had her at hello. Even though the three-storey, four-bedroom beauty needed some significant renovations, both Bogden and her husband knew right away that this house was “the one.” The couple moved in shortly thereafter with their cherubic two-year-old twin boys in tow, and the family of four settled comfortably into what would serve as their beloved family home for the next 26 years.

The love-at-first-sight lightning bolt struck when the young family walked over the threshold and encountered the soaring ceilings in the home’s front entryway. It gave the immediate impression of ample living space and was awash in natural light. “It felt like the perfect place to raise a family,” explains Bogden. Perhaps what sealed the deal, though, was the stunning English garden waiting for them out back. The home’s then-owners hailed from the U.K. and one of them had a remarkable green thumb. The lovingly maintained grounds were a welcome sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of city living and offered plenty of room for the backyard adventures that the boys would no doubt embark on in the years ahead.

A HOUSE FULL OF MEMORIES

For the next 26 years, the house, and the surrounding idyllic Moore Park neighbourhood were the backdrop for countless treasured memories: family dinners, holiday celebrations, tenderly bandaged scraped knees, ascending growth-chart notches ... all of it happened right there, in and around the home’s four walls. The toddlers were soon school-aged, and then—in a blink—busy teens. Their friends came and went, spilling in through the doors and filling the home’s many rooms with noise, chaos and laughter. And, as invariably happens, the teenagers grew into men, and the house got a lot quieter.

It was around this time that Bogden’s husband, Gord, started hinting at the possibility of downsizing to a home better suited to a party of two. The active couple wanted to carve out more time for travel, among other adventures, and the idea of a smaller home started to make more and more sense. She held out for a short time because readying yourself to leave a house full of memories can sometimes require some mental and emotional preparation, but, ultimately, she agreed that their treasured family home was more house than they needed.

IN SEARCH OF A NEW LOVE

When it came to choosing a real estate agent, the Moore Park residents knew that they wanted to partner with someone deeply familiar with the neighbourhood and all the wonderful attributes that make it, in their view, among the best places to live in Toronto. In this city, where our neighbourhood is like our very own version of a small town, they knew that Cailey Heaps and the Heaps Estrin Team were a natural choice for the task at hand. Not only had the Bogdens heard many positive stories about the midtown brokerage, but Heaps Estrin signs were a fixture on Rose Park Drive and neighbouring streets for a reason—the team has ranked number one in Central Toronto in 2023. Beyond that, though, and on a more personal note, Cailey grew up just a block away from the home, and, thanks to her own fond memories, you would be hard-pressed to find a more ardent fan or enthusiastic ambassador for the peaceful enclave.

For her part, Cailey was delighted to partner with the Bogdens as they sought to set off on their next chapter. She had always admired the house as she passed by, and her first visit confirmed that its striking curb appeal was equally matched and naturally complemented by a beautiful interior, a thoughtful layout and a welcoming atmosphere throughout. “It is a strong, happy house, on a great lot with an unmatched location,” says Cailey. It is “an incredibly warm and truly special family home.”

LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE

The decision was made to purchase before selling as the Bogdens did not want to endure the pressure of finding their next perfect home with a closing date looming over their heads, and they certainly did not wish to move twice. So, under the expert stewardship of the Heaps Estrin Team, their search began. The wish list was sensibly thorough, as, by now, they knew what they loved. They wanted access to transit, a nearby ravine, and an escape route to get out of the city when a reprieve was needed. They were quite willing to expand their search to other pockets of the city but, as it happens, their next home was mere steps away from the one they would be leaving. In the Bogdens’ case, lightning can and did strike twice because their new home is an equally perfect setting for their new stage in life as Rose Park had been for the last. “We couldn’t be happier,” says Bogden when asked about the epilogue to the story. “We have all new neighbours and get to enjoy the neighbourhood that we love from a new perspective.”

“WE HAVE ALL NEW NEIGHBOURS AND GET TO ENJOY THE NEIGHBOURHOOD THAT WE LOVE FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE”



Shortly after finding their new dream home, the Bogdens did indeed sell the family homestead. They credit the seamless experience and positive outcome—despite a somewhat tenuous market at the time—to the hard work and expertise of Cailey and her team. “They went above and beyond. They were receptive to all our requests and explained every part of the process along the way.” Ultimately, the house sold in under three weeks—again, in a market undergoing some significant shifts—for 99 per cent of asking.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Just before the home was listed, there was time for one more important event at 38 Rose Park Drive, and one more lifelong memory to be made. The Bogdens’ son Blake got married in the picture-perfect back garden (still lovingly maintained, which would no doubt delight its former caretaker). The elegant celebration was “absolutely perfect,” according to the mother of the groom. The festivities went from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. and many of the guests in attendance were the same childhood friends who had filled the home with so much laughter over the years. They laughed together again that night and gave the family home the most perfect send-off in the process, and a storybook ending to a chapter that began with love at first sight.

When reflecting on the cherished time they spent there, Bogden muses, “The house always made me so happy.” Could there be a better testimonial about the place one calls home? 🏡



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PICTURE PERFECT

CAITLIN CRONENBERG ON HER LATEST PHOTO SERIES AND WHAT TO EXPECT FROM HER POP-UP AT THE LOBBY IN MAY

INTERVIEW BY LORA GRADY

AWARD-WINNING PHOTOGRAPHER and Toronto native **Caitlin Cronenberg** couldn't think of a better place than The Lobby to launch her cool new series. After checking out her friend Maggie Devereux's recent exhibition and spending time in the space, she knew it would make the perfect venue to display her latest work. This May, Cronenberg will be The Lobby's artist-in-residence with a collectible series of art prints and other goods, created in collaboration with makeup artist Amy Harper.

What made you want to work with The Lobby?

It's such a unique space in Toronto! It's so rare to find a gallery that is also a

perfectly curated shop where you instantly want to own every single thing on the walls and the floor. The team at The Lobby has amazing taste in goods and is super knowledgeable about art. I reached out to them directly to propose we launch the *Words of Mouth* series and brand, and after our first meeting, we knew it was a perfect fit.

What does it mean to you to have your work celebrated in this way in your home city?

Toronto loves and supports the arts. Living here my whole life, I have seen and felt the city doing more and more to support artists. Between the pandemic and directing my first feature film, it has been a *long* time since I have had the opportunity to exhibit my work, and I am so excited to be part of the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival again this year!

What can people expect from your pop-up at The Lobby in May?

My residency at The Lobby is going to be a multifaceted launch. Not only will the Words Of Mouth photography series be displayed on the walls, but the *Words of Mouth* brand is also launching. Our company has been working hard with incredible artisans and a team of extraordinary women to create our core collection, and we cannot wait to share it in May. We will be releasing bold word candles, fine jewellery and high-end apparel—the items will first be available at the launch at The Lobby. This will be a very exciting launch for us and we are so thrilled that The Lobby will be the first location to carry our brand. Our ethos is to work with other inspirational women whose talents complement our brand and to collaborate to create unique products inspired by the art series. 🙌



FOR MORE INFORMATION, follow @THELOBBYBYHEAPSESTRIN on Instagram, visit THELOBBYBYHEAPSESTRIN.COM or stop by in person at **1120 YONGE STREET**



THE INSIDER

THE HEAPS ESTRIN TEAM SHARES THE FESTIVALS, FUNDRAISERS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS THEY LOOK FORWARD TO EACH YEAR

“I love participating in the **Princess Margaret Walk to Conquer Cancer** in September. It’s a tradition now! I walk in honour of my mother, Heather Heaps, to raise money for cancer research.”

—Cailey, President & CEO, Broker of Record

“My husband and I try to attend the **Just for Laughs Comedy Festival** each year. Toronto’s growing popularity is attracting bigger and bigger acts every year.”

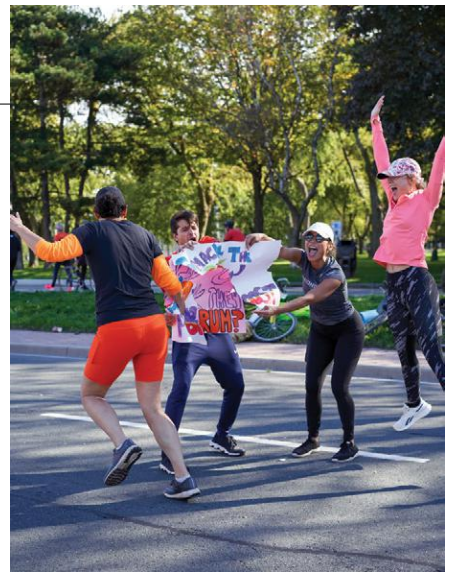
—Brenna, Real Estate Agent

“**Toronto Gay Pride**, because love is love and pride matters.”

—Aman, Real Estate Agent

“I look forward to the **Ukrainian festival** every year. My girlfriend is Ukrainian, and her family makes it a priority to attend every year. The food and atmosphere are so incredible, and it is always fun to learn more about the different cultures Toronto has to offer.”

—Landon, Sales Assistant



“I eagerly await the **Toronto Marathon** each year. Whether running or cheering on the sidelines, it’s such an inspiring day. People push past their limits and surprise themselves with their capabilities.”

—Jewels, Director of Marketing & Brand Innovation

“I most look forward to the annual **Mayfair** in Rosedale Park. I’ve been going since I was a child and rode ponies and did three-legged races. Mayfair brings the community together and raises funds for our local Mooredale House Community Centre.”

—Cathy, Real Estate Agent



“I love the vibrant energy that **Taste of Little Italy** brings to my neighbourhood. With diverse vendors, great food, live shows and neighbours connecting, it’s a wonderful way to experience our city’s multiculturalism and makes for a fun evening or weekend activity!”

—Katherine, Assistant Director of Strategy & Insights



SPRING CLEAN WITH PURPOSE

MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATIONS IN TORONTO

WORDS BY **STEPHANIE MATAS**

Decluttering is more than a basic chore. While it requires patience, time and no small amount of elbow grease, the results are worthwhile. You get a newly organized space and those in need can benefit from items you no longer need.

These six charitable organizations in the GTA are happy to accept your gently used clothing and household goods. Not only will you be helping others, you'll be supporting the environment too.

LEGEND: ACCEPTED DONATIONS

-  APPLIANCES
-  FOOTWEAR
-  BOOKS
-  FURNITURE
-  CLOTHING
-  HOME DECOR
-  CONSOLES
-  RENOVATION ITEMS
-  ELECTRONICS
-  SPORTING GOODS

DIABETES CANADA

Providing critical funding to over 11.9 million Canadians living with diabetes, the organization collects and diverts up to 100 million pounds of donated clothing and household items from landfills each year.



How to donate:

- Schedule an at-home pickup
- Drop items in Diabetes Canada donation bins
- Deliver to Value Village stores, a partner of Diabetes Canada

Cost: No cost for donating; free pickup service available

Learn more: declutter.diabetes.ca

FURNITURE BANK

Your old coffee table, dresser or couch can change a life by providing much-needed home furnishings to newcomers, those transitioning from homelessness and escaping abuse.



How to donate: Drop off, or arrange for pickup

Cost: Furniture removal and pickup pricing starts at \$160

Learn more: furniturebank.org



GET WELL GAMERS

Are your kid's video games and consoles collecting dust? Donations to Get Well Gamers provide medical and mental benefits, like pain relief and motor skill development, to children in youth hospitals, hospices and other facilities.



How to donate: Box up and mail out

Cost: Shipping a <5-kg parcel is about \$13 to \$16

Learn more: getwellgamers.ca

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORES

These non-profit retail stores specialize in selling donated home improvement goods at discounted prices, ranging from 30 to 70 per cent off their original retail value. This allows low-income families to affordably furnish and maintain their homes. In exchange for your donation, you'll receive a charitable gift receipt.



How to donate:

- Schedule an at-home pickup (garage or driveway only)
- Drop items at a Habitat ReStore
- Arrange for the Habitat ReStore Deconstruction team to come to your home and dismantle major household items, such as kitchen cabinetry,

countertops and appliances, bathroom fixtures and more

Cost: No cost for donating; free pickup service for larger items

Learn more: habitatrestore.ca

KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF CANADA

Declutter your closets and support the Kidney Foundation of Canada. Or recruit friends, family and the local community to host a clothing drive.



How to donate:

- Schedule an at-home pickup by calling 1-800-414-3484 or visiting kidneyclothes.ca
- Drop off items in a Kidney Clothes Drop Box near you (locations listed on website)

Cost: No cost for donating; free pickup service available

Learn more: kidneyclothes.ca

NEW CIRCLES

New Circles prepares vulnerable individuals for employment in Toronto, completely free of charge. When you donate, you're investing in programs and community-based initiatives that focus on inclusion and personal betterment.



How to donate: Drop off

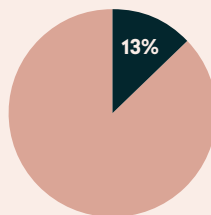
Cost: No cost for donating

Learn more: newcircles.ca

WHY DONATE?

WHO YOU HELP

→ There are around **9,000 unhoused people in Toronto**



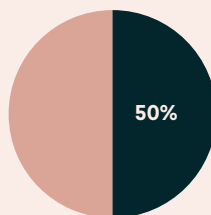
→ **13 per cent** of Torontonians are **living below the poverty line**

→ **Nearly 160,000** Torontonians are **newcomers**

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

→ **760,000 tonnes** of waste are handled by the city of Toronto each year

→ **16 kilograms:** the amount of **textile waste** the average household in Toronto throws out each year



→ **50 per cent of Toronto garbage** is sent to a **landfill** in London, Ontario



ASK THE CONCIERGE

THOUGHTFUL ANSWERS TO YOUR PRESSING QUESTIONS

**Dear Concierge,
How can Pantone's 2024 Color
of the Year, Peach Fuzz, be
seamlessly integrated into our
lifestyles, homes and fashion?**

Although Pantone is *the* colour authority, remember that the colour will be replaced next year, so it may not be something you want to invest a lot of time or money into. With that in mind, the best way to integrate the peachy hue is with accessories and novelty items. At home, think throws, decorative cushions, vases and even tea towels in the kitchen. Luckily, peach works well with a variety of neutral shades, like ivory, taupe and navy, so it will work with many decor schemes. In fashion, consider adding a peach scarf, button-up shirt or cardigan to your wardrobe, something you can easily pop on with jeans or dress pants.

**Dear Concierge,
Before I put my house on the
market, what quick fixes should I
make to boost its selling price?**

Many easy changes can make your home more attractive to buyers but you'll want an expert's opinion before you start making them. It's best to talk with a real estate agent and home stager first. Our top fixes are painting any bright- or dark-coloured walls in a more neutral shade, updating light fixtures, getting the house thoroughly cleaned and windows washed, and ripping out or replacing old carpeting.

**Dear Concierge,
Can you suggest wellness or
fitness centres that are popular
in Toronto?**

Our city has a wide range of places to go to unwind or get fit, from meditation studios to functional training facilities. Recently opened Klabb Studios near Summerhill offers high-end customized training and is responsible for Heaps Estrin President & CEO Cailey's newfound love of working out. Jaybird, with locations on Queen West and in Yorkville, offers mindful movement, stretching and Pilates classes. Othership, on Adelaide West and Bloor Street West, markets itself as a body-positive, alcohol-free, supportive space for anyone to enjoy saunas, ice baths and sober socializing.

**Dear Concierge,
What are the top design trends
of 2024?**

Peach isn't the only colour coming to home decor. While calm neutrals and quiet luxury have dominated both fashion and interior design, in 2024 we'll see trendsetters inching away from minimalism. We're not talking full-on maximalism but instead incorporating bolder, deeper colours, like jewel tones. These hues look great in small accents or splashed over full walls. One shade in particular to watch: amber. You'll soon be seeing the moody yellow everywhere.

Metallics will also be brought into the mix. High-shine, almost

surreal finishes add some luxury. And natural elements—think lots of houseplants—create a lush contrast to the heavy metal. The final look is rich and layered.

Love patterns? There's also a romantic revival happening. Look for bold florals in rugs, wallpaper and textiles and incorporate them freely. Not ready to commit? Opt for lush floral arrangements instead.

In kitchens and bathrooms, we're seeing more statement-making tiles and cabinetry. Update your all-white spaces with bold hues or soothing shades but don't be afraid to add a bit of personality and excitement into these often monotone rooms. 🍷

**Have a question for
the concierge?**

Think of The Lobby—our second location at 1120 Yonge Street—as your very own neighbourhood concierge. Whether you need a specialized trade recommendation, a referral for a trusted mortgage broker, or are looking for a new restaurant recommendation, we have you covered. Visit us at 1120 Yonge Street, call us at 416-424-4910 or email thelobby@heapsestrin.com. We're always happy to help.

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