
OTTAWA CITIZEN

The Soho Brand

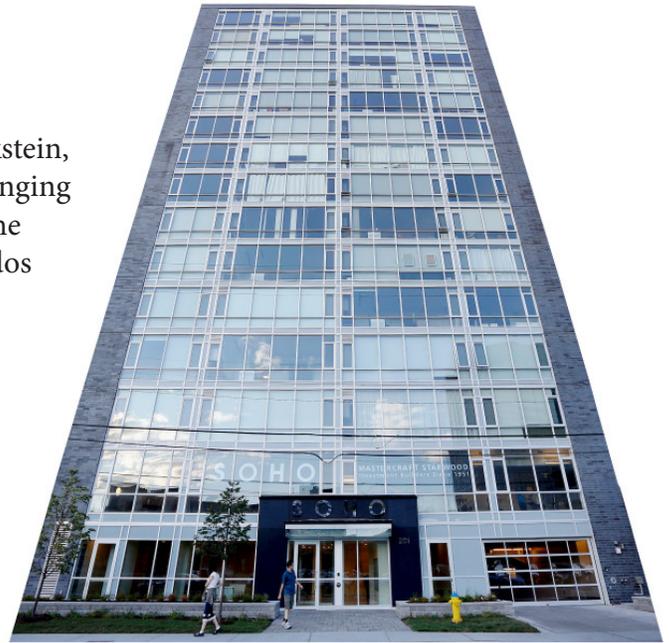
Reprint

Bruce Greenberg and his star team of designers: Brian Gluckstein, architect Rod Lahey and body builder Dalton Brown, are bringing plush, hotel-inspired living to the city. Last week they took the wraps off Soho Parkway, the first in a growing family of condos meant to impress and pamper.

By Sheila Brady, The Ottawa Citizen July 6, 2012

Photography by: David Kawai, Ottawa Citizen

The morality police better be on high alert: There is a new party place in town. It's 17 floors up on the terrace of Soho Parkway, a slick condo on Parkdale Avenue with a hot cool factor and filled with 20 and 30-year-olds.



Oversized barbecues are installed, furniture is set to arrive any day and a big hot tub is ready to bubble. There was a big Canada Day party on the terrace, which packs one of the best views in town, including Parliament Hill, the Gatineau Hills and the Ottawa River.

The city lies below, stretching out like a sumptuous meal for the famished.

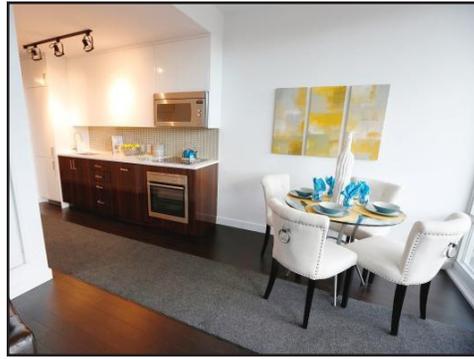
The question looms: How long before these young singles get it on in the hot tub high above the city?

“There are cameras,” says Joshua Beelen, the impeccable, always polite and very discreet concierge, who can line up a meal, or tickets at the National Arts Centre or walk one of the dogs in the glass-and-black-brick building set across the street from a multitude of government offices at Tunney’s Pasture.

The Soho Parkway is the first hotel-inspired condo developed in Ottawa by a surprisingly shy, yet determined, Bruce Greenberg. He’s the son of John Greenberg, the scion who launched Mastercraft Starwood in 1951 and built condos across Ottawa, including the Atriums in Kanata and on Hunt Club Road.

Back in July 2009, the younger Greenberg (no relation to Minto’s Greenberg family), who was raised in Ottawa but now calls Toronto home, sampled demand here for high-design living with luxurious amenities usually found in boutique hotels.

At Soho Parkway, that means marble foyers, marble from floor to ceiling in bathrooms and European-inspired appliances that hide behind cabinetry in small, sleek kitchens. Some lucky condo owners get big outdoor terraces.



The Soho Parkway is the first hotel-inspired condo developed in Ottawa by Mastercraft Starwood and includes amenities such as a commercial-level gym and an intimate theatre with a big screen and plush seats.

There is a commercial-level gym designed by world champion body builder Dalton Brown, an intimate theatre with a big screen and plush seats and, when business calls, a conference room where residents can meet. Many residents work across the street at Tunney's Pasture.

It's slick and very sophisticated.

Greenberg, who likes Ray-Bans, faded jeans and sneakers, has done this before, scoring hits in 2007 with high-end, luxury, hotel-inspired condos at the Soho Met in Toronto's Yorkville where prices ranged between \$3.3 and \$12 million a unit.

In Ottawa, hundreds of mostly young buyers and investors lined up out the door around the corner at the Parkdale Avenue sales centre in the summer of 2009, scooping up condos by design superstar Brian Gluckstein in a building crafted by Ottawa's own condo genius, architect Roderick Lahey.

Seventy-five sold in two hours, the rest of the building followed shortly after. Both buyers and investors bought into condos that started at \$200,000 and now have increased by at least \$70,000 to \$80,000.

Less than a year later, Greenberg struck again with Soho Lisgar, a 12-storey, glass-and-brick building with a lap pool, theatre and more eager young buyers with money in hand for the 132 units located off Bank Street.

Then, in June 2011, Greenberg and his team launched Soho Champagne, a twin tower off Carling Avenue with bigger units geared to older buyers with deeper pockets and featuring townhomes arranged around the base. More success.

Last week, the city's planning committee approved Greenberg's most ambitious condo, Soho Italia, a slender glass tower stretching up 30 storeys, with a podium at street level that will feature restaurants facing Preston Street at Carling Avenue and overlooking green parkland surrounding Dow's Lake.

"It is a brand," says Alain Miguelez, program manager of development review for the city's inner urban area. "I have watched them evolve from Soho Parkway. They were testing the temperature of the city and were so overwhelmed by the response that they got excited and looked for more locations," says Miguelez, who worked with Lahey and the Mastercraft Starwood team on all of the condos.

"They do try to distinguish themselves from the competition with their architecture and type of amenities."

The Soho success is a reflection of where the city is going demographically, says Miguelez. "People also want to live in these neighbourhoods, so it doesn't come as a surprise."

On the 17th-floor terrace, Lahey points out a site to the north, closer to the Western Parkway, where Urbandale this past week got approval for a 28-storey condo. Richcraft has plans for a 28-storey building and Tega also has a request for a 30-storey tower. Over on the south side, close to Scott Street, Richcraft has plans for another 28-storey building and to the east, Claridge wants to build a condo tower.

The condos are good news to Lahey, who regrets the Ottawa River is shut off from many residents and welcomes intensification around transportation nodes.

Everybody says they are selling luxury, Greenberg said last week at a gathering of Soho Parkway residents and folks who designed and built the condo. “Soho is pure luxury. What Apple has done with the computer, we have done with condos. They are better because we care about the design. We sweat the details,” he said moments before a black cloth was dropped to reveal coloured glass under the canopy of the main entrance. Designed by glass experts Oded and Pamela Ravek, the clear-and-blue glass is meant to resemble waves in the nearby Ottawa River.

The focus is now on finishing Soho Lisgar and Soho Champagne and launching construction of the most ambitious condo in the Soho brand, Soho Italia.

“It’s taken a lot of effort. But it’s all worth it,” says Greenberg, who is now looking for a site for the next in the Soho family.

Back on the 17th-floor terrace of Soho Parkway, the parties continue.

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