

NEW HOMES

Checking in on Brampton



MARTIN SLOFSTRA
EDITOR'S
NOTE

I had an ulterior motive in attending a neighbourhood block party put on by developer I2 Developments at its Southside site in Brampton this past Saturday afternoon.

Sure, I wanted to learn more about what is going on in this Steeles Ave. West neighbourhood, but with Mayor Patrick Brown scheduled to say a few words, there was also a chance to find out what is happening in the bigger picture and in the community.

First up, I've been watching the construction of the Southside community closely having attended a launch event in Spring 2018, followed by hard-hat construction tour of the site on a bitterly cold day last November. (Phase 2 of this development includes 109 three- and four-storey luxury townhomes, a 12-storey condo on the site is also set to launch.)

But this time, it was more about fun, as I2 Developments senior team gave its new home buyers and residents of the area a chance to enjoy a free BBQ, music and lots of children's activities.

Turns out it was also a lesson in the joys of new home construction. On this day, the construction site manager tells me 80 days were lost because of rain and rain delays, either it rained too much or the grounds were too wet.

Then the extreme heat of Friday afternoon meant workers were sent home early. When it comes to new home construction, weather is the big unknown.

This all came in the course of waiting for Mayor Brown to arrive, tied up at a previous commitment and running late, when the conversation turned to some of the challenges experienced by the City and its own development efforts.

As you may know, the City of Brampton has worked hard to promote its Downtown Reimagined project, one of the first steps in delivering on its Brampton 2040 Vision.

In the next few years, downtown Brampton will be a hive of activity as a number of exciting initiatives bring



Patrick Brown, mayor of Brampton, Sam DeCaria, vice-president, I2 Developments and Gary Collins, director of communications for the City of Brampton welcome guests to a neighbourhood block party held July 6 at the Southside Community in Brampton.

in new development and growth including partnerships with Ryerson and Algoma Universities, a new centre of cyber security/innovation/library, a riverwalk, and most important of all, creating a pedestrian- and biker-friendly aesthetically beautiful streetscape around the historic Four Corners at Main and Queen St.

Setback No. 1 occurred last October, however, when the Ford government pulled funding for a Ryerson University campus in downtown Brampton as approved by the previous Liberal provincial government.

Setback No. 2 came about more recently because nobody could have estimated the sheer work (and cost) involved in replacing the city's aging sanitary and storm sewer and water-main system, not to mention dealing with the City's complex flood plain and river bed restrictions.

Long story short, the result has been delays in its downtown beautification efforts, although in a short interview after his comments, Mayor Brown did say the City of Brampton remains extremely committed to delivering on all the promises made in its Reimagined Downtown vision statement, albeit with some "slight delays."

Further, Brown commented that the City will only want to see more development (in both the Steeles Ave. South and downtown areas) because it's only greater density that will enable bring those area's renewal efforts.

"We got the land," says Brown, much of it yet to be developed, adding that it may be that only a matter of time that Brampton's growth will catch up and surpass that of Missis-



Phase 2 of the Southside Community development includes 109 three-storey and four-storey townhome units with outdoor rooftop terraces.

sauga, although that is probably a whole other topic of discussion.

One thing that was also made clear to me is that formerly divided, Brampton City Council is much more united on where the City needs to go.

So, rather than ram the ideas through, it will move forward with more caution. The city also has promised to move forward plans, with or without Ryerson, for the Centre of Innovation/Cybersecurity Centre/Library, and still hopes to begin construction at the 8 Nelson St. site in downtown Brampton.

City council voted also unanimously in favour of proceeding to the next phase of this ambitious project, which involves hiring consultants and an architecture team to plan for the project.

Too slow for some, we are sure, but when it comes to building a new home site or a city, unforeseen delays or setbacks will always be part of the equation. Regardless, progress is being made.

Laneway and infill homes contribute to rental housing stock



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BILD's RenoMark renovators and custom home builders went on a tour of laneway and infill homes in Toronto a few weeks ago.

With laneway dwellings allowed to be built in Toronto and East York as of last summer, our members are enthusiastic about the possibilities of this housing type and eager to learn about the technicalities of building it.

The term laneway home refers to a secondary dwelling built behind the main house, with which it shares utilities. As the name suggests, this second home typically faces onto a public lane.

Many urban dwellers are excited about laneway homes because they provide a number of benefits for homeowners and for neighbourhoods.

A laneway home can serve as a source of rental income or as living space for extended family. Laneways that have homes facing onto them feel safer and more vibrant. Laneway homes increase neighbourhood density in a non-intrusive way, and, perhaps most importantly, they can contribute some much-needed rental housing.

A case in point is the first laneway home we visited on the tour, which just broke ground in the Junction. The owners are planning to rent out the two-storey, three-bedroom house when it's completed. And theirs may not be the only home facing the lane for long, as some of the neighbours are reportedly interested in building on their own lots.

Across town in Leslieville, the second laneway home we looked at is currently being rented by a young family. The two-storey, two-bedroom house, converted from an existing garage, offers a feeling of spaciousness, both in the open-concept living area on the ground floor and in the courtyard behind the house.

An infill project in Leslieville was next on the tour itinerary. Infill construction refers to building and ren-



ovating homes in established neighbourhoods.

Like laneway housing, it can add gentle density. The house we visited, built after an unusually shaped lot was severed into two properties, has a basement apartment that can provide rental income for the homeowner.

If you are thinking of adding a laneway home on your property or building or renovating an infill home, your best bet is to work with a professional RenoMark renovator or custom home builder.

He or she will help you navigate the specific zoning requirements, design considerations and construction techniques of these housing types. To find a RenoMark renovator or custom home builder in your area, visit renomark.ca.

And be sure to visit the City of Toronto's website to learn about incentives they are providing for homeowners who are building laneway homes.

We need innovative solutions, like laneway and infill homes, to help us meet the generational challenge of building enough housing for the 9.7 million people who will call the GTA home by 2041.

— Dave Wilkes is President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD). For the latest industry news and new home data, follow BILD on Twitter, @bildgta, or visit www.bildgta.ca.