



# new condo guide

GTA EDITION

Advice | MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITIES

## The magic of master-planned communities

By Rafael Lazer



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**WHEN IT COMES TO** choosing a new condominium in Toronto and across the Greater Toronto Area, many buyers are opting to live in master-planned communities. From the ground up, these neighbourhoods are designed to offer a convenient lifestyle in addition to excellent residences. They provide the opportunity for a community way of life and may increase the chances for a return-on-investment over time.

By definition, master-planning incorporates a mixed-use component that allows residents to walk to a selection of services and amenities. In addition, the surroundings are taken into consideration so that traffic lights and access roads make sense for residents driving, bicycling and walking in and around the neighbourhood. Adding a building into an infill spot in a mature neighbourhood may not necessarily have this advantage.

Master-planned communities typically involve enough housing options to accommodate numerous residents. This is great news for buyers, as it means the developer is committed to the community for years to come. The inherent assumption is that the neighbourhood will be completed eventually, which instills confidence in purchasers.

Aesthetics play a major role in master-planning as well. When the community includes two or more condominium residences, the buildings have to coexist with harmonious architecture. In a master-



planned community, this vision may even extend to the selection of public art that enhances the cohesiveness of the community components.

A prime example of a master-planned community that satisfies all of the above criteria is Emerald City in North York. This multi-tower neighbourhood is distinguished visibly by massive cones and cylinders by Canadian artist Douglas Coupland, and building entry points match their primary colours. The community features the Parkway Forest Community Centre, which is open and in use. Among its numerous amenities are a fitness centre and daycare facility. With Emerald City's location at Don Mills and Sheppard, it is also close to Fairview Mall, schools, parks, major highways, public transportation and other local amenities and services. Proximity to all of these provides added value.

The value of the real estate where Emerald City is located has vastly increased. According to the *Globe and Mail* (article by Tara Perkins, dated September 12, 2014,) the value of the area exceeds many other condominium communities in the GTA. This may have potential benefits to purchasers and existing residents in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Of course, developers cannot achieve all of this alone. Developers work with City Councillors to ensure that the master-planned communities comply with municipal regulations and add to their surroundings. Emerald City occupies one of the largest blocks of land in North York, so it has to fit in well with the entire area. Everything was looked at carefully from all angles in order to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. In fact, that's a good way to sum up what a master-planned community is all about.

Each master-planned community is unique. As the developers contemplate similar neighbourhoods to Emerald City in other areas in Canada, we continue to look for ways to streamline residents' lifestyles through meaningful amenities. Developers of master-planned communities and the municipalities where they create them need to consider society's interests.

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