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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2017 SECTION H

ON ON2

> HOW WE LIVE

Panda to honour past



RICHARD LAUTENS/TORONTO STAR

Buyer Vince Teti checks out the downtown neighbourhood where he's bought a three-bedroom suite at Panda Condominiums. With him are builder Brian Brown of Lifetime Developments and Jo Saul of Type Books, who will curate a library for residents of the new condos coming to the site of the former World's Biggest Bookstore.

New condo coming to site of World's Biggest Bookstore will include a library devoted to Canadian literature

JONATHAN FORANI
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

When news broke in 2013 that the World's Biggest Bookstore was shuttering its doors, book lovers mourned the loss of a Toronto staple.

Memories shared on blogs and social media revealed its place in Toronto's cultural landscape: Lovebirds told how they'd roamed the store's aisles on first dates, tourists recounted gawking at its expansive 64,000 square feet and newcomers explained how they'd practised English there.

The bookstore was torn down in 2014, but its memory will remain when Lifetime Developments' Panda Condominiums opens in 2021 with a curated library of Canadian literature included in the project's amenities space.

The importance of the store to Torontonians caught the developers off guard, Brian Brown, vice-president of Lifetime, says. "It was interesting to see what kind of a role this building and this business had in many people's lives in Toronto." And his company's commitment to honour the Bookstore is part of what he sees as a developer's role in city building.

"It's important to remember the past. In some cases, it's preservation of buildings, in other cases it's a recognition to what happened in the past on that site," he says. "There's always a fine balance between looking to the future and remembering the past."

Panda Condos will rise as two 30-storey towers to include 555 suites ranging from 356-square-foot studios to three-bedroom units over 1,400 square feet.

PANDA continued on H4

"There's always a fine balance between looking to the future and remembering the past."

BRIAN BROWN
VICE-PRESIDENT OF LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS



ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE/TORONTO STAR

Decorate just one spot with a Christmas wreath, flower and fruits to save room in a small kitchen.

Serve up a festive party in the kitchen

The heart of the household is a favourite go-to spot

VICKY SANDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Because I have come to accept the things I cannot change, I acknowledged weeks ago that my annual Christmas bash would unfold in the kitchen.

No matter how much I might fluff the living room, and despite the fact it's small, aging and cluttered, my kitchen is party central.

Rule No. 1: do not schedule renovations beforehand.

Just before Thanksgiving one year, the Man of the House (MOTH) and I decided to knock down a space-gobbling partition. How was I supposed to know that taking a sledgehammer to a pole would bring down a good chunk of the ceiling?

Another year, we installed laminate just before a shindig, leading us to conclude that we valued the state of our union more than we valued the state of our kitchen.

While there has been no more construction, there have been many more celebrations. There have been mishaps — one year, water began gushing from the ceiling above the kitchen sink. Another year, the symptoms of Norwalk virus rapidly set in among the younger guests.

PARTY continued on H4



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Curators praise developer's decision

PANDA from H1

Retail shops are planned to enliven street level; parking for cars and bicycles will be built underground. As well as indoor amenity space, an outdoor lounge and bar area, and barbecue areas are included in the design.

The announcement of the bookstore's closing came at a time when Toronto had been buzzing about the loss of prominent Toronto institutions Honest Ed's and Sam the Record Man, both locations acquired for new developments and both stirring much discussion about what should be done with their iconography and memory.

Where the signage of those stores will be displayed at Ed Mirvish Theatre and Yonge-Dundas Square, respectively, the recognition of the World's Biggest Bookstore at Panda Condominiums will be in spirit. The library of Canadian literature is being curated by Type Books owners Jo Saul and Samara Walbohm — both have PhDs in Canadian literature.

Saul remembers, as a teen, wondering about the Bookstore's famous name. "I thought, 'What a great name! Is it really? Is this true?' It was vast and it seemed endless. You could just lose yourself in that world."

For Saul and Walbohm, the partnership with Lifetime has a greater meaning as independent bookstore owners in a city where few still remain in the face of big chains.

"To acknowledge the importance of an independent bookstore to civic culture is an important thing to do," she says.

"I don't want to think about the independent bookstore as a dying breed, because it's a vibrant cultural hub in my estimation. That acknowledgment of (the World's Biggest Bookstore) space as an important cultural building enterprise is really great."

At Type Books, Saul and Walbohm create custom libraries for architectural firms, interior designers and individual clients. This is their first for a condo developer, and Saul calls it their "baby," a collection that's especially close to home as Canadian literature experts.

Some of what Saul calls "the expected gang" may be included, such as *The Handmaid's Tale* author Margaret Atwood and Nobel Prize winner Alice Munro. But more importantly, the Type Books owners feel they should "expand and interrogate" how CanLit is defined and consider authors such as Indigenous writer Eden Robinson, who was shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize this year.

Along with the curated collection at



LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS

Panda, named for its black and white exterior, will include a stretch of retail shops in the building at street level.



TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

The World's Biggest Bookstore was a favourite spot on downtown Toronto's Edward St. for residents and visitors alike from 1980 to 2014.



LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS

The suites will range from open-concept studios to three-bedroom units.

Panda Condominiums — so named for its black and white design — amenities will also feature a games room, a lounge area with private study rooms, and a theatre that can be used for watching the Super Bowl as easily as a movie or a presentation.

The location near Yonge-Dundas Square was the main attraction for excavation and haulage expert Vince Teti, 41, who recently purchased a three-bedroom corner unit for just over \$1.1 million. But the Type Books library and nearby Ryerson Univer-

> PANDA CONDOS

Location: 20 Edward St.
Builder: Lifetime Developments
Architect: Alliance & Turner Fleischer Architects Inc. Interior Designer: Ceconi Simone.
Landscape Architect: Strybos Barron King.
Building: Two towers, 30 storeys, 555 suites
Suites: From 356-sq.-ft. studios to 1,462-sq.-ft. three-bedroom units
Pricing: From the high \$300,000s
Tentative Occupancy: May 2021
Contact: Sales centre at Baker Real Estate, 3080 Yonge St., Suite 3056; pandacondos.com; 416-927-8980

sity are a plus.

Teti's wife, Amal, is a high school teacher, and the couple has three kids under age 4 who could be burgeoning readers by the time the family makes the move from Vaughan in 2021.

Teti hopes the library and nearby university will encourage their kids to learn.

"It exposes them to the culture and promotes education," he says.

Though the World's Biggest Bookstore is gone, its legacy is just beginning to take shape at Panda Condominiums.

Small space, small group of guests make it fun

PARTY from H1

With those memories in mind, I like to start with low expectations for parties. My invitation read: "I'm having a party (in my small, cluttered kitchen). No-one interesting (except me, and possibly you) is coming. The food will all be store-bought. But if you're not doing anything, drop by after 7 p.m. If you come, bring wine."

This helps cull the list, which is a good thing. Whoever said "the more, the merrier," never threw a party in a 9-by-12-foot kitchen.

A kitchen party should always start with a thorough cleaning, because while you can get away with a kitchen that's out-of-date — or even messy — a grubby one is just unpleasant. Besides, chances are you'll be indoors more during the next few months, making this a good time for a deep clean.

Cupboards, floorboards and walls (well, most of them) were washed with an environmentally-friendly Borax mixture.

It took MOTH and I just one Sunday afternoon, during which I recounted my hilarious story about how-the-ceiling-cracked-when-I-whacked-the-partition-with-the-big-demolition-thingy. I thought I detected the merest hint of lingering bitterness.

Over the next week, I cleared out the fridge and cleaned it with eco-friendly, germ-killing hydrogen peroxide in a spray bottle, which is also good on kitchen counters — especially during flu season. I also emp-



ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE PHOTOS/TORONTO STAR

Writer Vicky Sanderson, left, and party guests enjoy a laugh in her 9-by-12-foot kitchen with finger foods and drinks near at hand.



Gifts for guests, such as small boxes of chocolates, add to the decor in a basket by the door.

tyed a main-floor closet for guests' coats.

Floors were cleaned using a mop with an on-board vessel (Libman) that I filled with water, vinegar and rosemary oil, and which infused a seasonally-appropriate scent. Fifteen minutes before folks arrived, I whipped 'round once more.

Extra glassware and all my serving utensils went into the dishwasher, into which I added an Affresh dishwasher cleaning tablet to dissolve mineral build up. It can go into any model — including while the machine is full — to keep it all shiny and



Utensil-free hors d'oeuvres and treats, with plenty of napkins, make it easy for guests to nibble and chat.

bright. I'll add another at the end of party season.

Next came a ruthless countertop clearing of appliances and utensils — everything was put into a couple of boxes, shoved under the table and hidden with a pretty cloth.

As we don't have any under-counter lighting (see reno/marriage above), I added small lamps to illuminate recessed areas. Earlier in the week, MOTH cleaned the ceiling fan/light fixture, and bought new dimmable LEDs, because we agree effective, flexible lighting is a must in any kitchen — even when fixtures are

ancient and unbeautiful.

I used one run of countertop for drinks. Instead of a full bar, I always offer a signature drink — this year, rum and Coke — along with some non-alcoholic options. Metal cooking bowls serve as ice buckets.

There's less fuss if food doesn't require utensils, so think smoked salmon on toast, a cheese/charcuterie board, one-bite quiches. Have lots of cocktail napkins on hand.

Designate another corner for coffee. I ran out of time to bake, so I bought large chocolate chip cookies and piled small mountains of gold-wrapped Ferrero Rocher chocolates in bowls.

The blessedly small-footprint stand mixer (KitchenAid Artisanal) was left out to make whipped fresh cream for coffee drinks, as was cinnamon and Bailey's. Rumour has it that some partygoers were dipping their chocolates or cookies directly into the cream.

In a small kitchen, I like one decor focal point.

Atop an open wooden cupboard, I placed an affordable wreath where a picture usually hangs, and put a glass bowl with seasonal fruit and scented candles on a wooden tray. These all came from HomeSense, as did the wood and stone serving boards on the kitchen table.

Greenery softens the edges of an awkward kitchen like mine, hides some of its imperfections and adds fragrance. I took cuttings from our evergreens, but live branches are easy to find at big box and grocery stores.

I like sending guests home with a little gift — an ornament, handmade cookies, premium hot chocolate mix — and a basket near the door encourages that.

Of course, you'll still want to spend a few minutes on the living room, even if it's just dimming the lights and adding candles. Because, inevitably, a few guests will insist on hanging out there, no matter how much you've primped the kitchen.

> ASK JOE

Winter selling needn't be a snow job



Joe Richer

OPINION

I was recently offered an amazing job on the West Coast, so I'll have to sell my house as soon as possible. Everybody says that December and January are terrible months for selling.

Are there any special considerations I need to think about?

First of all, congratulations on the new job!

One consideration you definitely need to think about in December and January is safety. Selling your home involves welcoming parades of visitors into your living space, sometimes on short notice, so it's very important to keep outdoor walkways and stairs free from ice and snow.

December and January can be challenging months for home sellers, but remember: if somebody takes the time to look at your house in the dead of winter, they're probably pretty serious about making a move.

Your first step is to find a real-estate salesperson who understands those challenges and can adjust the marketing strategies accordingly.

Even if you have to make a quick sale, it's still a good idea to shop around and meet as many candidates as you can to determine your best listing agent. Don't be afraid to ask questions about experience, services, references, fees and commissions, availability during the holidays, and anything about how they plan to market your house.

For example, you could ask about holiday decorations: will they help you sell your place, and how much is too much? A string of Christmas lights and a wreath on the door might be nice touches, but what about a giant inflatable Santa Claus on the front lawn?

Your sales representative may have experience in the art of staging homes for viewing and knows what appeals to buyers and what doesn't, so be sure to have this conversation. They may suggest different strategies when beautiful summer plants aren't visible in the dead of winter.

When I bought our home in December, that seller had photos that showed it in the summer. I found that very helpful.

Real-estate salespeople are trained and knowledgeable professionals who can guide you through the sales process. Listen to their advice, but always keep in mind that you're in the driver's seat. It's your house up for sale, and only you can accept or reject an offer.

If you aren't sure how much money you want for your house, your salesperson can provide you with the listing prices, selling prices and other attributes of homes that recently sold in your neighbourhood, as well as a useful analysis of the relevant information. All of which is an excellent starting point for establishing a listing price.

Still, if you need more information than just a ballpark figure derived from local sales numbers, and you're concerned about the effect the winter-selling season may play in negotiating a final sales price, you can always get a formal appraisal of your home's value from a designated appraiser.

Your representative can help you make that decision. But keep in mind that some real estate salespeople have completed the additional necessary course work themselves, and are qualified to perform appraisals. That's an issue you may wish to discuss when you interview potential candidates.

People buy and sell homes year-round in Canada.

Your best strategy for success is to make your home look neat and presentable, remove any ice or snow from outdoor stairs and walkways, and set a listing price that works with your strategy.

Joe Richer is registrar of the Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO). He oversees and enforces all rules governing real estate professionals in Ontario. Email questions to askjoe@reco.on.ca. Find more tips at reco.on.ca, follow on Twitter @RECOhelps or on YouTube at youtube.com/RECOhelps.