

Two St. Thomas

by STACEY MCLACHLAN

It's not often that a rental property gets the VIP treatment, but Toronto's upscale Two St. Thomas tower is the exception to the rule. The luxury rental property houses 250 sleek residential units; elsewhere in the building, renters have access to common spaces like a lounge, fitness centre and rooftop.

It's just one of dozens of purpose-built rental projects developer Bentall Kennedy Group is building throughout major North American cities (this particular one in collaboration with KingSett Capital), with the goal of catering to an underserved market of upscale renters. "In our view there is strong market demand for high-quality product that comes with professional management and security of tenure," says Rahim Ladha, VP of corporate communications for Bentall Kennedy. "The inspiration for the design of Two St. Thomas applies to two primary demographics in the marketplace – the baby boomer down-sizers and the Millennials. Both segments seek good-quality housing in a convenient location wherein they can remain active and connected to the surrounding community."

Surrounded by a dense mix of Victorian-era houses, University of Toronto gothic collegiate-style buildings, and upscale, high-rise residential complexes, architectural firm Hariri Pontarini Architects worked to elegantly blend the design of Two St. Thomas with the neighbourhood, while still embracing modern design. The result is a striking 26-storey tower, defined by its horizontal and vertical lines, and clad in high-quality, enduring materials including natural stone and precast concrete.

Floor-to-ceiling windows line the building to bring in plenty of natural sunlight, and for the building podium cladding, Hariri Pontarini Architects used Algonquin limestone cladding. For the north elevation of the south tower, precast concrete and texture panels were used to add articulation. Projected metal panels in contrasting colours were integrated into the tower glazing system, used to create an exciting pattern; bronze mullion framing and bronze spandrel glazing add a little bit of glamour. The metallics carry on into the main entrance and accent canopies, where 16 oz. copper is used for cladding.

For the desirable demographic of residents Bentall Kennedy is targeting with Two St. Thomas, design definitely matters, so Hariri Pontarini Architects and interior design consulting firm

Cecconi Simone kitted the suites out with high-quality features like quartz countertops and custom cabinetry.

Technology was also incorporated seamlessly into the building design: the elevators are equipped with a destination dispatch feature, each suite features a smart thermostat and residents can use keyless entry via their smart phones. And by giving users increased control over the HVAC and lighting systems, occupants can adapt their environments efficiently and easily. "A high degree of controllability of both lighting and thermal comfort systems is available to occupants so that the indoor environment can be customized to individual need," says Mell Furs, communications lead at Hariri Pontarini Architects.

Located in Toronto's Yorkville neighbourhood, Two St. Thomas is the first purpose-built rental property in the neighbourhood in almost 15 years, and Bentall Kennedy looked to hotel accommodations for inspiration. "Hotel-style amenities are a well-established trend, and the value placed on these amenities factors heavily into the lifestyle choices that residents are making," Ladha explains. A large rooftop terrace with outdoor lounge and fireplace occupy the 12th floor; elsewhere, residents have access to two dining rooms with gourmet kitchens, a professionally appointed fitness studio, a luxurious lounge with fireplace, an in-house pet spa and an automated parcel management system.

Outside, the landscaping is just as luxurious as the building itself. "In keeping with the luxury vision of the project, the landscape is designed to complement the architecture with crisp, clean and contemporary lines," says Janet Rosenberg, landscape architect. "The material palette blends with the architectural materials so that there is a flow from interior to exterior spaces." Rosenberg gave structure to the garden with evergreens, and incorporated grasses to bring volume, texture and seasonal interest. Low-maintenance, drought-tolerant native and adapted plant species round out the planting selection. Up on the 12th floor outdoor lounge, Rosenberg and the team installed a steel pergola and large fireplace to organize the terrace and provide spaces for people to gather, entertain or relax.

Sustainability has long been a key value for Bentall Kennedy, so it made perfect sense that the goal for Two St. Thomas is LEED Gold. "There is a



growing public sentiment that expects the buildings that they occupy to adhere to lofty sustainability standards, and empower them to make lifestyle choices that benefit the environment too," says Ladha. So materials made with recycled content or manufactured locally were given preference in this project, and wood products were selected to be Forest Stewardship Council-certified. Every fixture has been selected for its energy efficiency and eco-friendly properties, and each suite features a central "master-off" switch for in-suite lighting.

"As designed, the project is modelled to use 45 percent less energy by cost than the National Energy Code building baseline," explains Furs, thanks in huge part to the work of mechanical and electrical consultant Nemetz (S/A) and Associates Ltd. In the four-storey parking lot, five special spaces are outfitted for charging electric cars. To encourage cycling, 285 bicycle parking spaces are planned for the P1 parking level and ground floor, as well as 46 uncovered bicycle racks outside. Thanks to the selection of water efficient plumbing fixtures and fittings, potable water consumption will be reduced by 37 percent over the LEED baseline.

Of course, no project is without its challenges. Because the neighbourhood is high-density, with a large volume

LOCATION

2 St. Thomas Street, Toronto, Ontario

OWNER/DEVELOPER

Bentall Kennedy (Canada) LP / KingSett Capital

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

PCL Constructors Canada Inc.

ARCHITECT

Hariri Pontarini Architects

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT

Jablonsky, Ast and Partners Inc.

MECHANICAL/**ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT**

Nemetz (S/A) and Associates Ltd.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Janet Rosenberg & Studio Inc.

INTERIOR DESIGN

Cecconi Simone

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST

\$130 million

of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, Bentall Kennedy worked closely with contractors PCL Constructors Canada Inc. and the neighbours to keep the line of communications open and make sure construction was as unobtrusive as possible.

Adapting to bylaws prompted a bit of creative thinking, too. "City constraints required all mechanical systems to be concealed within the building. In other words, the mechanical equipment was not permitted to project from the building or be exposed whatsoever," explains Furs. The solution? "The south tower roof is very clean and features a white stone ballast and all of the equipment is in louvred or open-aired rooms as part of the glazing system on the 25th and 26th floors."

There was also the issue of future-proofing the project: because the structure was created for a joint ownership between Bentall Kennedy and KingSett Capital, it needed to be designed to be potentially severed in the distant future. "It was very interesting coming up with details and scenarios where the one half was severed and structurally removed and the remainder was retained," says Craig Slama, of structural consultants Jablonsky, Ast and Partners Inc.

Reimagining the possibilities of rental properties has been no small task, but with an estimated budget of \$130 million, Bentall Kennedy is on track to complete this project in October 2017, with an anticipated occupancy date in December 2017. **A**