



COURTESY PAGE + STEELE / IBI GROUP ARCHITECTS

Concord Park Place Discovery

by Luigi Benetton

Concord Adex Development Corporation builds not just buildings but entire master-planned communities. One such community in northern Toronto is now bearing its first fruits; Concord Park Place Discovery has welcomed its first residents.

The farther people live from the city core, the more likely they are to drive. Discovery will appeal to drivers, given nearby access to major east-west and north-south highways.

But Concord Adex will also give Discovery buyers alternatives to cars. Subway stops at the northeast and northwest corners of the development sit on a 'spur' line that connects to a downtown line. "The subway was just being built when we were doing the preliminary design work," recalls Brian Curtner, principal of Quadrangle Architects Ltd.

Discovery plans to host a car-sharing service and run shuttle buses to both transit stops and nearby malls during rush hours. A diagonal pathway through the west part of Discovery leads directly to one TTC station. "We hope to reduce people's dependency on cars," says Gabriel Leung, director of development for Concord Adex.

Built on grounds formerly occupied by a Canadian Tire warehouse/distribution centre, Discovery consists of blocks 19 and 20. Block 19 contains two 28-storey buildings, while Block 20's buildings measure 16 and 12 storeys, plus a series of three-storey townhomes.

The project team accomplished a lot since breaking ground in 2009. "We didn't have many problems building Discovery," says Ed Caranci, senior project manager for EllisDon Residential Inc. "Outside of above-average rainfall in May and June of this year, the project proceeded smoothly. We actually made up time in the winter on forming."

Tim Jantzi, a partner with MCW Consultants Ltd. and the mechanical project manager for Discovery, echoes Caranci's comments. He notes that MCW enjoys a relationship with Concord Adex that spans 15 years. "We've stayed with a consistent team, and mechanical and electrical systems," Jantzi says, adding "We're always fine-tuning them as we go."

Canadian Tire kept a parcel of land on the north-east corner of the plot to build offices, and Concord Adex provided

several means of access to the land. "On the north edge of this project, we built a cul de sac [Singer Court] meant to serve both residents and the office building," says Curtner, adding "There's a passage beside the parking garage running from the south to the future office building to the north."

"When they're ready, they can break down the block wall where the tunnel ends and connect it to their building," adds Neil Hylton, project manager for Concord Adex.

"One unusual feature of the project is the variation of soil strata supporting capacities," says Agha Hasan, principal with Halcrow Yolles. "The towers on the east side are supported on very weak stratum. The foundation system for this block consists of 1,200 driven structural steel H-piles going anywhere from 14 to 20 metres down – a very unusual foundation system to be used in Toronto. On the other hand the soil strata on the west side is strong enough to support the building on spread footings. An expansion joint has been provided in the building to separate the foundation types."

The architects adapted the design accordingly. "We put most parking on the site's west end," says Tim Gorley, executive vice-president for Page + Steele/IBI Group Architects.

Soil conditions affected the project timetable. According to Caranci, "We couldn't start Block 20 until we finished the pile work for Block 19."

The site also features a three-storey change in grade sloping down from northwest to southeast, necessitating a series of retaining walls. The podium on the northeast side stays level towards the southwest, where Esther Shiner Boulevard swoops below CN Rail tracks.

The CN Rail line, or more accurately, the required 30-metre setback from the tracks, forms the eastern boundary. The team used the land's contours to prevent trains that derail from hitting a building. That setback, plus a centre court surrounded by Discovery's buildings, form much of the landscaping, part of a formidable amount of public land Concord Adex plans to continue just west of Discovery.

During construction, nearby businesses like IKEA and a Canadian Tire store to the west, proved accommodating thanks to communication and measures like vibration

monitoring and dust control. "We regularly cleaned Esther Shiner Boulevard," says Caranci of the road that leads to IKEA and borders Discovery to the south.

Having 1,100 potential customers take up residence so close may also have encouraged surrounding businesses. "They're going to need furniture," and other things, Hylton points out.

While maintaining relations with neighbouring businesses, Discovery does not mimic their design. For instance, the two sides of each tower sport different colours. "They look like two thin buildings merged into one," Leung says.

Concord Adex located amenity spaces (pool, exercise room, games rooms) at the south end in black and white box expressions leading to the CN Rail underpass. "We took advantage of the slope by creating spectacular spaces at the south end," Curtner explains, noting they'll fill with natural light streaming through roughly 200 panes of glass.

That glass makes a great canvas for Vancouver artist Derek Root, who embedded colour film within the glazing system to create, in Leung's words, "watercolour imagery." "It will light up like a colour lantern at night, as you see it from the highway," Leung says. Root also stylized old Ontario survey maps and embedded them in the street-level wall below the white box.

A second artist, Jaakko Pernu of Finland, has created three pseudo-doulls made of corten steel as a sculpture trellis that people can walk through.

To the west, the Discovery Piazza across the street from Canadian Tire will feature both street-level retail and a European-like courtyard where people can linger. Drivers can park underground while they shop and discover the community started by Discovery. ■

- LOCATION**
1015 Sheppard Avenue East
North York, Ontario
- OWNER/DEVELOPER**
Concord Adex Development Corporation
- ARCHITECT**
Page + Steele / IBI Group Architects
- DESIGN ARCHITECT**
Quadrangle Architects
- GENERAL CONTRACTOR**
EllisDon Residential Inc.
- STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT**
Halcrow Yolles
- MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT**
MCW Consultants Ltd.
- COST CONSULTANT**
Altus Group Limited
- INTERIOR DESIGNER**
Cecconi Simone Inc.
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT**
The MBTW Group
- GROSS CONSTRUCTION AREA**
1,059,860 square feet
- TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST**
\$175 million