

SUCCESS STORIES.

COMMITTED BUILDING OWNERS KEY TO DOWNTOWN YONGE'S SUCCESS

A thriving retail district like Downtown Yonge may attract retailers with its bustling round-the-clock activity and 50 million plus pedestrian counts, but its future sustainability and growth lies very much in the hands of its building owners.

Committed, long-term investors are key to the district's success.

"You don't need to sell Yonge Street – it does that itself," says Karsten Rumpf, president of Quebec-based property investment and development company Prime Properties. "But where property owners can play a pivotal role in ensuring the long-term value of Downtown Yonge, is to invest in their buildings on an ongoing basis."



Prime Properties already owns eight properties along Yonge Street and, as Rumpf emphasizes, plans to be in the district for the long haul. "Our commitment is to acquire properties in Downtown Yonge, develop and invest in those buildings, and then hold them long-term," he explains.

245 Yonge Street is a case in point. Prime Properties was approached by a triple-A food franchise company last year when the restaurant chain was looking for a streetfront site on Yonge Street. Rumpf negotiated to build to spec for the retailer at the site directly across from Toronto Eaton Centre.

"It's been our experience that retailers are often keen to trade both in the centre and on Yonge Street itself, and we're pleased we could find a solution for this restaurant," he says. Another property that Rumpf is proud of is 275 Yonge Street, home to The 3 Brewers restaurant and brewpub. "Because this was the first establishment Les 3 Brasseurs opened outside of France and Quebec – and the first with an English name – the choice of both location and building was crucial," says Rumpf.

Prime Properties gutted and completely restored the heritage building so the new tenants could open for trade in mid-2009. Other Prime buildings include: 247 Yonge Street, where the U.S.-based Champs Sports occupies the premier ground-floor retail space; and 333 Yonge Street, where Rumpf recently re-signed HMV for a long-term lease. Prime also owns 271 Yonge Street, home to Asian Bowl restaurant.

Rumpf first spotted the investment potential along Yonge Street in the eighties, when the strip was known more for its seedy nightlife than as a prime retail destination.

Today, Rumpf points to high pedestrian and vehicle counts, thriving student and office worker markets and a growing residential population as key advantages. The urban management provided by Downtown Yonge BIA is another benefit, ensuring clean and safe programs, streetscape initiatives and advocating for the District's business community. "Plus, we're taking advantage of the special signage permissions available to retailers and property owners negotiated by the BIA in Downtown Yonge," he adds.

ING DIRECT CAFE TO BRING COMMUNITY, RESOURCES AND FRESH COFFEE TO YONGE STREET IN EARLY 2011

A thriving retail district is one that is constantly evolving and innovating, and in early 2011, the first-ever ING DIRECT Café in downtown Toronto will open at 221 Yonge Street.

Based on the idea that saving should be as simple as making a cup of coffee, the Café is a creative and fresh approach to banking. "We want to create a space for Savers by Savers," says Peter Aceto, president and CEO of ING DIRECT Canada. "So instead of providing branches, we provide Cafés where clients and visitors alike can interact with ING DIRECT as part of their community."

The Café concept is a simple one. Aceto describes it as a new kind of retail experience that focuses on educating, inspiring and sharing the values of ING DIRECT, rather than simply selling banking products. "While both clients and non-clients are welcome to come in and learn more about ING DIRECT's products



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and services, we also want to create a space where members of the local community can gather, share ideas and learn from each other's experiences.

Visitors can expect coffee, juice, light snacks and a space for local businesses to meet and discuss the community, environment and other shared issues. "All the proceeds from the food and beverages at the Café go to charity," says Aceto.

ING DIRECT opened its first Café in Toronto in 1998 at Finch Avenue East and the 404, with the first U.S. Café following in New York City in 1999. Today, there are seven Cafés in the U.S. and four in Canada's major cities. The decision to open on downtown Yonge Street, says Aceto, was firmly rooted in ING DIRECT's commitment to the community. "We don't see ourselves as a bank on 'Bay Street', we see ourselves as part of the community of 'Main Street'," he explains. "To us, Yonge Street is Canada's Main Street."

He points out that much of the foot traffic on Yonge Street are locals commuting to work, students walking to school, or visitors shopping at local retailers. "We believe this is the best way to engage with the local community in their day-to-day lives."

Slated to open in early 2011, the Café at 221 Yonge Street will feature a co-working space for employees, a community meeting room and an onsite employee space with a call centre. "The Café concept has always been about interacting with our clients and building the communities where we live and work," says Aceto. "The new Toronto Café will be very different to anything we've done before, but still remains true to this focus."

The Café will feature regular seminars aimed at helping the community become better savers, as well as free WiFi access. "We plan to spotlight a monthly Saver's Friend, a local retailer whose business is adding value to Toronto," he adds.

DOWNTOWN YONGE'S YOUTHFUL ENERGY A PERFECT MATCH FOR JACK ASTOR'S

Restaurant owner and operator SIR Corp. got more than it bargained for when it opened Jack Astor's® in Downtown Yonge two years ago: not only a top-performing restaurant, but also a whole new perspective on Jack Astor's as an urban downtown brand. "We had some reservations when the opportunity arose to open a 6,000 sq.ft. Jack Astor's in the new 10 Dundas East shopping complex," says SIR Corp. president Corey Dalton.

Although SIR Corp. already had a busy restaurant at Front and University, its success, they believed, was largely tied to its proximity to nearby sporting venues. "We weren't convinced that Jack Astor's was a good fit for urban downtowns," says Dalton, pointing out that its restaurants were usually in free-standing premises in fast-growth suburban areas.

In comparison, the space available at 10 Dundas East was on the fourth floor of a multi-storey building, in the heart of the city. But the large patio overlooking the vibrant and bustling Yonge-Dundas Square clinched the deal and in May 2008, Jack Astor's opened its doors in Downtown Yonge. "We liked the growth that we saw in the area and decided to take the plunge," he laughs. "Today, the restaurant has far exceeded expectations."

Of the 31 Jack Astor's across Canada, including two in the U.S., the Downtown Yonge restaurant is one of the top performers. "Our success with the Downtown Yonge location has convinced us that Jack Astor's is not only a fit for urban downtown locations – but a very good one," says Dalton.

Indeed, following the success of the restaurant at 10 Dundas East, SIR Corp. has opened two more Jack Astor's in the city – one at Yonge and Bloor, and one on John Street.

Dalton believes the Jack Astor's brand and Downtown Yonge have a natural synergy; both are characterized by youthful energy and tap into the student market. And with some 115,000 students in easy reach of the District – including the large student body at Ryerson University, just steps away – SIR Corp. has discovered a source of staff and future managers, as well as customers.

He points to consistent development in the district, a steadily improving urban environment, and a diverse community with which to engage, as key advantages of the location today. "We're all about feel-good dining and a playful attitude, and that works in Downtown Yonge," he adds.



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ALICE FAZOOLI'S AND CANYON CREEK TO DEBUT IN DOWNTOWN YONGE

SIR Corp., owner of popular multi-unit concepts Jack Astor's®, Alice Fazooli's® and Canyon Creek®, is set to open two restaurants in the brand-new Aura at College Park development, currently under construction on the northwest corner of Yonge and Gerrard Streets in Downtown Yonge.

At 75 storeys, Aura at College Park – slated to be Canada's tallest condo building – will bring three storeys, or 35,000 sq.ft., of prime retail space into the district.

SIR Corp. is excited at the prospect of opening two new restaurants in Downtown Yonge, says president Corey Dalton, with Alice Fazooli's and Canyon Creek being logical concepts for the space. Proximity to the busy Delta Chelsea Hotel; the high pedestrian and vehicle counts at the Yonge/Dundas intersection; the re-development of the Sam the Record Man site by Ryerson University; and of course the residents of Aura itself are all major attractions.



SIR Corp. also considered issues like parking availability, special signage permissions, the demographics of consumer markets, and specific area drivers like theatres.

Plans are for Alice Fazooli's at Aura to offer approximately 230 seats. "Don't expect Alice Fazooli's to be your average red-and-white tablecloth Italian restaurant," says Dalton. "We like to call it 'intriguing fresh Italian' that appeals to the inquisitive foodie."

Alice Fazooli's is an established downtown restaurant brand, with its first location on Adelaide Street. Its partner in the SIR Corp. stable, Canyon Creek Chophouse, is a premium casual restaurant – "with much more than just steak", says Dalton.

Canyon Creek at Aura plans to offer approximately 210 seats.

SIR Corp. employs a diverse range of metrics when assessing the performance of a restaurant, and Dalton points out that it all begins with the location decision.

But once the restaurant is trading, performance will be measured with financial indicators like Return on Investment (ROI) and same-store-sales growth; surveys to track guest engagement; SIR Corp.'s own operating standards and benchmarks; and making sure staff are passionate about their work.

Still, adds Dalton, the new restaurants aren't likely to be open for trade before 2012. Other big names opening at Aura include Bed, Bath & Beyond and BMO.