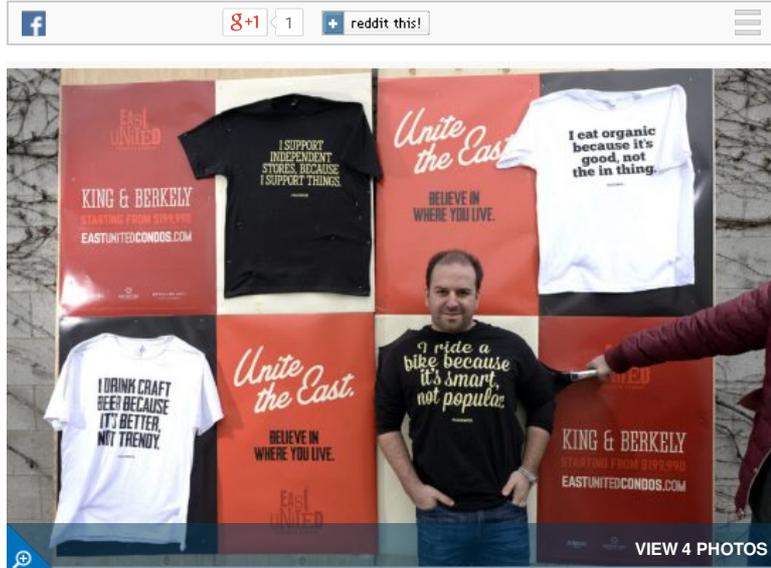


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Life / Homes

## New condo East United coming to Parliament, Berkeley Sts.

Marketing campaign stirs up Toronto's east-west rivalry



AARON HARRIS / FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Sebastian Mizzi, vice-president of SigNature Communities, gamely shows his commitment to the campaign for new condo East United by helping out as T-shirts are stapled to the marketing posters.

By: **Ian Harvey** Special to the Star, Published on Fri May 01 2015

Toronto's east end is making itself known on the city's distinctive skyline.

Witness the Canary District at Front and Cherry Sts., soon to be the Pan Am Games athletes village and the eastern gateway to the city; the former Lever Brothers site at the mouth of the Don River and plans to transform it into a business hub with 70,000 jobs; the east waterfront rebirth with new, mixed use construction; and just across the Don River, Riverside's renaissance and the New Broadview Hotel's transformations from dreary strip club Jilly's to a community gem.

And now East United is on the horizon, set to rise along both Parliament and Berkeley Sts., between Adelaide and Richmond Sts. On the Parliament side, a 21-storey condominium tower will sit atop a five-storey podium featuring retail and office space. On Berkeley, the heritage Christie, Brown & Co. Stables building is being refurbished and a pedestrian mews between the two streets will host townhomes. This isn't your gritty, red-brick industrial loft school of design anymore.

The timing is perfect, says Sebastian Mizzi, vice-president of SigNature Communities, which is building East United with partners Berkshire Axis Development and Andiel Homes.

"We're part of an established, distinctive community, we don't have to create anything — we just have to be part of it," said Mizzi.

His enthusiasm for neighbourhoods east of Yonge St. sprouts from his father's roots. "When we were kids my dad used to point out all the places in the east end where he grew up and went to school."

As part of the buzz campaign, they've commissioned posters and T-shirts with anti-hipster-esque, cynically east ender-type slogans, such as "This is Where We Live" and "I drink craft beer because it's good, not trendy." The T-shirts will be pinned to posters — they're meant to be taken by passersby — and mounted throughout Toronto's west-end in a good-natured show of rivalry.

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"We want people to wear what they believe — in a respectful way," Mizzi says, tongue firmly in cheek.

The east-west rivalry jibe is clearly a bit of marketing sizzle, but there's truth in it, too: The project joins some high-profile company with the Distillery District to the immediate south, the St. Lawrence Market within walking distance. The area is served by both the Queen and King streetcars and ramps to two major highways just a few minutes away.

East United plans for 279 residential units ranging from 350 sq. ft. to 1,400 sq. ft, plus six townhouses. Prices are slated to start at \$199,000 for the micro-units, rising to over \$550 a square foot for premium units.

Architect Ralph Giannone, of husband and wife team Giannone Petrocone Associates, worked with Giovanni A. Tassone Architects to come up with the overall design — a departure from glass-and-steel towers. They also partially conserved and reintegrated the two-storey red brick, 1906 heritage building, the Christie, Brown & Co. Stables on Berkeley St. Built in the Beaux Arts-style, the building will be used as a commercial space. Giannone describes it as a "fine representative and well-crafted example" of the style — classical architecture highlighted with renaissance ideas. It once housed horses for the nearby Christie, Brown and Co. cookie factory, founded in the mid-1800s by William Christie, a surname still synonymous with cookies.

Giannone likens the renaissance of King St. E and surrounding areas to similar developments on the downtown west side — Wellington St. W., at Portland St. (where his offices are) and Spadina Ave. and King St. W.

The east-end Corktown residents' association and the city worked to preserve the social and cultural fabric of the neighbourhood, Giannone said. He added the building's design is sensitive to the different streetscapes on Berkeley and Parliament Sts., and also strives to be an aesthetic form on both Richmond and Adelaide Sts.

"I think the renovation and reuse of the building which is now 51 Division (2004) was the turning point for the area," he said of the historic building at Parliament and Front Sts., the southern neighbour of East United.

For the façade, Giannone has used a variety of materials, some red brick to reflect the industrial roots and then fritted glass with a texture that will reflect a "purply red" light.

Because the development stretches from Parliament to Berkley Sts., the design incorporates a partially covered public mews and interior courtyard which he hopes will host a café with outdoor patio.

"At the office, we called it 'the Parliament-to-Parliament project,' because Berkley used to be Parliament St. and John Graves Simcoe constructed a new north-south avenue when he built Castle Frank and also called it Parliament St., which it still is today," he said. "It's rare to span two streets so we wanted to give it that access (with the mews) to bring the public in," he said.

Mizzi, meanwhile, is serious about investing in the east end's profile and plans to source 90 per cent of the merchandise, furniture and fittings from that side of the city. "We're hoping to get some west-end buyers too," he says, "but most will probably be in the east end already."

Matt Davis, co-founder of The Design Agency, says working on the project is a homecoming of sorts because they started in Leslieville, at Carlaw Ave. and Dundas St. E. They've designed a yoga lounge on the lower floors in the podium. On the 11th floor, a private dining room and even a music jam room which in turn opens up into a hobby area which an double as a concert lounge which again opens to the terrace and then further connects with the rooftop garden with seating areas and BBQ.

"It's about the outside coming inside and the inside going outside," said Davis who also created the building's signature colour palettes by pulling tones from the area's exterior facades.

"It's definitely not beige and taupe," he laughed. "There's a little of the industrial palette, the foodies from St. Lawrence — it's authentic."

The jam room and art space, and the "garage area" downstairs for mini construction or repair projects also reflect the roll-up-your sleeves and DIY vibe of the east end and the community of sculptors, painters, designers and musicians who live there, Davis added.

"We're working on the sound panelling now. It's a European wood-fibre product which looks fantastic and captures the sound," said Davis whose agency has won international awards, most recently best of the year in hotel design for their work on the Generator Hostel Barcelona, in Spain. Kitchens, too, have been styled to

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accommodate lifestyle interests with nooks and pull-out areas for hobbies and crafts.

Giannone said the concept of convertible interior space is a push-back against the standard allotment of condo amenities. "Instead of having everything in one place like an athletic or social club you have pieces you can move around and have a different experience and different view. We see it as not only fitting in with the neighbourhood but also creating a neighbourhood in the interior for the homeowners."

**East United**

**Address:** 93-95 Berkeley St. and 112-114 Parliament St.

**Builder:** SigNature Communities, Berkshire Axis Development and Andiel Homes

**Architect:** Giannone Petricone Associates with Giovanni A. Tassone Architects Inc.

**Building:** 5-storey podium, 21-storey condo tower with 279 suites; 6 townhomes with three and four bedrooms

**Prices:** From \$199,000 to more than \$750,000.

**Contact:** 416-642-7870, eastunitedcondos.com

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