

# NEW IN HOMES

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## **Etobicoke Evolution**

After a decade of building south of the Queensway, developer John Zanini is thrilled to see the area coming alive

By Elvira Cordileone  
Real Estate Reporter

Part of Dunpar Homes' latest townhouse development in south Etobicoke sits along a freshly minted street called San Remo Terrace. But the street name has nothing to do with the fact its president, John Zanini, is of Italian heritage. The street is named after a popular local bakery.

Zanini speaks with pride about the part he's playing in south Etobicoke redevelopment. In the last dozen years Dunpar has built more than 350 townhouses, including the newest project, Oxford Court Town homes, on Evans Ave.,



**VARIED FACADE:** Oxford Court, a project of Dunpar Homes, on Evans Ave. at Royal York rd., has transformed a shabby industrial area.

south of the QEW between Royal York Rd. and Islington Ave.

Why south Etobicoke? It's not ritzy like north Toronto. But the people are proud immigrants, the salt of the earth," said Zanini. "I think it's a great spot for medium-density."

Zanini said the combination of what he calls "neat and tidy older neighbourhoods" occupied by house-proud people, many of them Italian immigrants like his parents, interspersed with an abundance of industrial buildings, makes south Etobicoke ripe for redevelopment.

Gary Wright, the city's director of community planning for the area, concurs. He said the southeastern portion of the Queensway has a mix of land uses, from waterfront and industrial (some of it obsolete) to residential, that makes it particularly amenable to townhouse developments.

"Planning is partly about context," said Wright. "Evans Ave. has older houses across the street (from Oxford Court). These new

houses aren't going to look like a 40-year-old house, but if they're very residential. Townhouses tend to be a little bigger, a little taller. They tend to change the character of the place."

A Canadian Tire store was the last commercial occupant of the 4.5-acre piece of land where Oxford Court now stands. The store had earlier housed a winery. The 126-unit condo development has alternating brick and stone facades. Its northern border is the QEW.

In the mid-1990s, when Zanini was negotiating to buy the Evans Ave. property, he said the former Canadian Tire building was practically worthless.

"You couldn't rent it out for \$1 a square foot," he said. "It was pretty rough down there."

"Neighbours welcomed Dunpar's proposal for the site", according to Zanini.

"The neighbours see it as an enhancement," he said. "It can only add to the neighbourhood by taking out the industrial."

Zanini has been in the construction business, both commercial and residential, for about 25 years. He was a general contractor before he started buying industrial land along the Queensway around 1987. He has been living and working in south Etobicoke his entire career "because it was close to the water."

Dunpar's first townhouse project was at Grand Ave. and Beaverdale in 1991. Since then, there have been developments at Grand and Brussels St., Grand and Manitoba, Dales Ford and Wesley St., among others. The developments ranged in size from 16 to 93 units.

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## **TOWNHOUSES**

### **Residential Boom Helping revive the Queensway**

## Dunpar townhouses in South Etobicoke



**RE-ENERGIZED:** John Zanini, left and Mark Mintzer sit in front of Oxford Court. *'In the short run, you may make more money with condos, but you can be more creative with townhouses'*

Oxford Court is Dunpar's eighth and largest project to date. The project has 126 townhouses and it's the first to be offered as condominiums.

But at a time when builders across the GTA are redefining skylines with condominium towers at a furious rate, why does Dunpar continue to build townhouses?

"Our other projects were freehold with maintenance agreements. But there was no reserve fund. After six or seven years, components were breaking down and there would be confrontations between neighbours," said Mark Mintzer,

"I stuck with what I did," said Zanini, noting he doesn't care for the "fickleness" of the condo market and the long process involved in getting to market.

Dunpar's marketing vice-president. "For the buyer, the condo gives them a much more contented feeling. And long term, it holds up the value of the property."

"In the short run, you may make more money with condos, but you can be more creative with townhouses. I like the fact I can play with facades," said Zanini.

"The (Oxford Court) site could have warranted 400 or 500 condo units. But we've got a fixated mindset. We do townhouses," said Mintzer. "We don't pre-sell. We invest in the project first and then go to market."

Oxford Court has been built in two phases. The 54 units in the first phase

But there's more than context and preference for building a certain type of structure.

are sold out, and only about half the 71 units in the second phase are still available.

As Wright points out, land along the waterfront further east, for example the former motel strip, costs a great deal more than some locations further west. Building low- or medium-rise construction on such expensive land is simply not financially viable.

Some buyers have already moved into the complex.

Mintzer said Oxford has attracted many young professional couples and empty nesters, who like living only a 15-minute drive from the core

Mintzer said the number of upcoming developments along the Queensway is going to ensure property values stay on the upswing.

while living in a house that costs them half as much as similar accommodation would cost downtown.

With the 18-screen Cineplex about to open at Islington Ave. and the Queensway and the influx of more new housing, Zanini predicted the

Standard features include central air, a gas fireplace, and

Queensway will experience an impressive degree of revitalization in the next few years.

hardwood strip floors and nine-foot ceilings on the main level, a walkout deck, five appliances and a six-foot Jetta tub.

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*'In the short run, you may make more money with condos, but you can be more creative with townhouses'*

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The 1,600-square-foot two-story unit has two bedrooms plus a den. The 2,000-square-foot three-story unit has three bedrooms plus a den. They are priced between \$240,000 and \$300,000 \$150 a square foot.

Ikea, the Swedish furniture giant, is building a store on the Queensway that's expected to open in the fall.

"John and King St. were battered. Now look at it," said Zanini.

The maintenance fee is \$75 a month, with two-thirds of the fee placed in a reserve fund for repairing shared items such as fences and roofs.

The model house is located at 9 San Remo Terrace and can be viewed daily from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and weekends from noon to 5 p.m. The site is closed Fridays.

For more information, call 416-253-5888.

"The only thing that's 'condoized' is snow removal and grass, said Mintzer. "Each house gets its own backyard.

Mintzer said the company has been refining its product from project to project by listening to buyers and incorporating their suggestions. For example, laundry facilities used to be in the family room but he said Dunpar changed its design and moved them to the main floor after clients told them that's what they wanted. And what had been designated an open space in the loft suitable for a den was changed into a master bedroom.