

A practical marriage

Tamarack is teaming up with Toronto developers to build sleek condos in the Byward Market



SHEILA BRADY
Homefront

An Ottawa builder has joined forces with a trio of Toronto developers to inject cash and building smarts into two sleek condo towers planned for the Byward Market.

The Taggart Group of Companies, led by Tamarack Developments, is bringing several million dollars to the table, seasoned staff and construction expertise, says David Parkes, president of Tamarack and its sister company, Doran Construction.

"We spent a number of weeks rigorously examining all aspects of the project and the Toronto principals. These are very good people we are partnering with and all prospects point to a very successful project."

Last week, the Taggart Group entered a partnership with David Wex, Mark Reeve and Brad Lamb of Urban Capital Developments to build two condo towers at Cumberland and York streets on the eastern edge of the Byward Market. A third condo tower is also in the preliminary stages.

The two towers, valued at \$37 million, were a sales hit in the spring when dedicated urbanites swarmed the sales centre. During a preview, more than 100 buyers showed up and 25 of 106 condos in the first 14-storey tower sold. Sales staff then took 1,300 names of potential buyers and rushed the second condo onto the market; again there were fast sales, with 30 per cent of the 84 condos selling.

Young professionals looking for an urban address and their first home quickly bought up all of the small condos, which started at \$98,000, while high-end, larger penthouses ranging

between \$400,000 and \$500,000, were bought by older buyers looking to downsize in downtown Ottawa.

However, the developers lost early sales and then regained sales. Under provincial legislation, there is a 10-day cooling off period when buying a condo. "The first few weekends were chaotic and then some people changed their mind," says Mr. Wex.

The three developers have had successes in Toronto selling similar urban condos, and from the start were looking for an Ottawa partner to construct the east market buildings.

"We tend to hire general contractors to build the buildings we develop," says Mr. Wex.

In this case, early talks centred on Doran, which is experienced in commercial and highrise construction. "In this case, they liked the concept so much they bought the company, or 50 per cent of the company," the Toronto developer said following a meeting with the Tamarack-Doran team earlier this week.

Now Doran will do the construction, Tamarack will provide building expertise and the Toronto developers will oversee marketing of the project.

"This is better because if your construction company is a partner, it's golden. It means you are always on the same page, always working together," Mr. Wex said.

East market is Tamarack's first major foray into urban building.

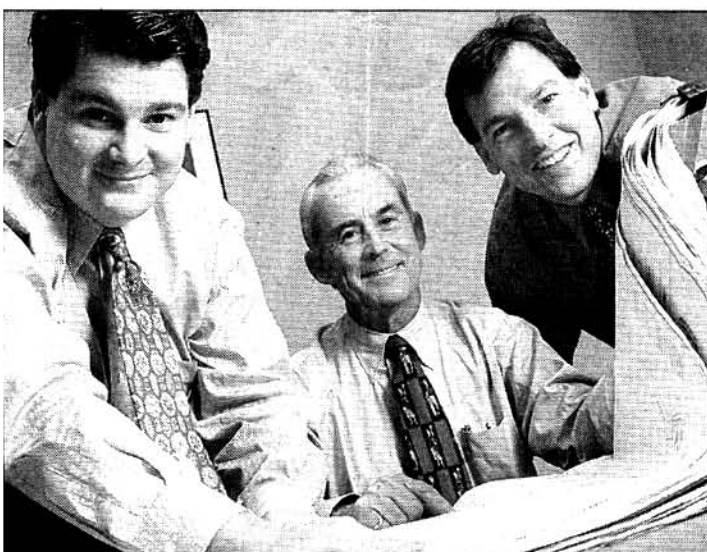
The company is a leading Ottawa builder, carving out healthy sales with its adult-lifestyle communities of bungalows and winning sales with suburban homes in Kanata, Nepean and Gloucester.

"We are a suburban tract builder," says Mr. Parkes. "Not everybody wants to live in the suburbs and it's evident there are buyers that wish to be part of the centre core. We are builders and developers and we want to meet all those market demands."

In fact, the most recent new home sales numbers from the



Ottawa builder Tamarack Developments has entered a partnership with three Toronto developers to build this condominium complex at the eastern edge of the Byward Market. Construction is expected to start in late fall.



BRUNO SCHLUMBERGER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

From left: Scott Parkes, David Parkes and Chris Taggart of Tamarack are eager to work with Urban Capital Developments.

Corporate Research Group shows that the Byward Market project has catapulted the Toronto trio into sixth spot among Ottawa builders for the first eight months of the year. The Urban Capital Property Group recorded 101 condo sales, ahead of Tamarack, which had 92 sales. Minto was at the head of the pack with 540 sales or 20.7 per cent of the market, which was healthier than July sales of 271. There were 271 sales in August, in-

cluding 140 single homes, 106 townhomes and 25 condos — many in Ottawa and in the Byward Market.

East market is a novel entry into the Ottawa new home scene, with Toronto architect Babak Eslahjou designing condos starting with 446 square feet and flexible walls that could be easily moved about. The \$98,900 Alto quickly sold out because buyers were looking for a first house and an urban location, says Mr. Wex.



YVONNE BERG, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Architect Babak Eslahjou, left, and Urban Capital Developments' Brad Lamb, Mark Reeve and David Wex at one of their Toronto projects.

The success of small condos at east market prompted the company to split 1,000-square-foot condos priced at \$220,000, creating a 460-square-foot South Beach model at \$102,900 and the Navigli model with 555 square feet for \$119,000.

The condos feature a huge balcony, large windows, living and dining room and walls that slide around the bedroom. "These are flexible spaces because the bedroom can be opened up and you get full

space," says Mr. Wex.

The technology meltdown hasn't affected sales of the higher priced penthouses, with lawyers and designers doing deals, says Mr. Wex.

Construction will start when the towers are 65 to 75 per cent sold, says Mr. Parkes. Currently 80 of the 120 condos in the first tower are sold and 20 of the 80 condos in the second tower have buyers. The partners expect construction to start in the late fall.