

DOMICILE DEVELOPMENTS:

Finding potential and building on it

Domicile Developments is an award-winning, Ottawa-based boutique development company specializing in urban infill. With over 40 years of experience, and hundreds of condominium apartments, lofts, freehold singles and townhomes to its name, Domicile has been around the block a few times.

Domicile counts among its proudest moments the decision in 2010 to make all of its new condominium developments 100% smoke-free. This came about during a meeting in which the green initiatives for an upcoming development, *One3one*, were being reviewed. Senior Vice-President David Chick recalls that the idea had instant appeal; the company's executive group felt that it was the right thing to do, surmising that for every sale that might be lost because of the decision there would be one or more to gain. A simple clause inserted in the declaration established *One3one's* smoke-free status. That was 5 years ago and Domicile has never looked back. When asked about compliance and enforcement, Chick notes that even with unit turnover in the buildings, there have been no reported issues.

All of its condominium developments since 2010 are 100% smoke-free indoors and out, including parking lots and common areas. This is advertised in the company's brochures, and their sales people boast about it early on in conversations with potential buyers. As the only smoke-free developer in Ottawa, Domicile's smoke-free stand has been positively accepted by buyers and the community at large. Chick says he can't imagine any of Domicile's future multi-unit buildings permitting smoking. With smoke-free workplaces and public places now the norm, smoke-free condominiums are a natural extension of what he calls "part of our emerging culture."

Another part of this new emerging culture is a focus on vibrant and livable communities. The selection of urban infill sites for development means that buyers are moving into established neighbourhoods with excellent proximity to shops, services and public transit. Urban densification injects new energy into neighbourhoods, gets people out of their cars, and helps to reduce suburban sprawl.

With respect to smoking and indoor air quality in multi-unit residential buildings, LEED certification (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) requires that all indoor common areas are smoke-free (already required by provincial law), and sets out requirements for sealing and weather stripping to



minimize air transfer between units. In addition, outdoor designated smoking areas must be at least 7.5 m away from doorways, air intakes and operable windows. Domicile saw the marketing potential of going beyond LEED's minimum building requirements for second-hand smoke, and the smoke-free status of its buildings has become a selling feature sought out by buyers.

One of Domicile's upcoming developments is *The Corners on Main* in Old Ottawa East. It will feature a pair of 6-storey buildings totaling approximately 140 units, with retail shops and services and a restaurant on the ground level of the building fronting on Main Street. Featured on its website is a 100% smoke-free environment, like the previous 5 developments. The project will be a focal point of Ottawa's new "complete streets" initiative: streets designed to provide safe and comfortable access for people of all ages, gender, abilities, and modes of travel—including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists. The City begins construction on the redevelopment of Main Street as a "complete street" in 2015. A 100% smoke-free environment indoors and out for *The Corners on Main* fits nicely with the City's efforts to create a more livable and healthy community.

Recognizing the developer's pioneering spirit and contribution to public health, Ottawa Public Health presented Domicile Developments with a Smoke-Free Champion award in 2012. This award joins their 2011 and 2014 Tarion Award of Excellence for customer service (high-rise category). Congratulations, Domicile Developments—a company that does indeed find potential and build on it.

For more information:

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