



HAROLD GREEN BUILDING

A 21st-century Toronto tower embodies sustainability, affordability and community

The City of Toronto is examining ways to retrofit and upgrade its 1,000+ residential towers, to better align them with emerging ideas of community, and concerns for the environment and energy efficiency. But these priorities also apply to new construction – and are embodied in a new, 232-unit residential tower in Toronto.

The Harold Green Building is a 100% affordable rental building that mixes family and non-family units as well as supportive and regular housing, and incorporates environmentally friendly elements as an essential part of its long-term affordability.

The developer, Verdiroc Development Corporation, selected materials that would require low maintenance, oriented the building for maximum use of the sun, and added features such as low-flow toilets and showers, low-e glazing and upgraded insulation, energy-efficient appliances and lighting, and occupancy sensors in all common areas. The Natural Resources Canada Commercial Building Incentive Program allowed Verdiroc to retain the engineers needed to effect upgrades that resulted in a building more than 25% more efficient than required by the building code.

Construction began in January 2005 and the first tenants arrived in March 2006. While all tenants enjoy rents well below the market norm, Verdiroc has also formed partnerships with community organizations that offer additional support: the Canadian Mental Health Association rents eight of the units for its clients, while Accommodation, Information and Support, a supportive housing group for people with disabilities, rents five; the City has also selected 30 units for its waiting list of people who are under-housed or in shelters. An Ontario Early Years Centre in the building offers valuable programs to families in the building and the neighbourhood.

These measures helped to qualify the Harold Green Building for several types of subsidies and incentives, including the Canada-Ontario Affordable Rental Housing Initiative. CMHC allowed affordable housing flexibilities through the waiving of the mortgage loan insurance premium, while the City of Toronto provided a low-interest loan and waived development charges and 20 years of realty taxes, helping to ensure long-term affordability.

Finally, the neighbourhood itself is geared to affordability of another kind: with the large Sears-Fairview Mall and the Don Valley subway station within a two-minute walk, and ready access to the Parkway Forest Park, many residents will not need vehicles. The building also encourages cycling by incorporating two safe bicycle-storage rooms.

Key facts

- Target group: low- to middle-income singles and families
- 232 rental units (4 bachelor, 97 one-bedroom, 106 two-bedroom, 25 three-bedroom)
- Cost to build: \$175/ft²
- Cost to rent: \$750/month (bachelor), \$951/month (one-bedroom), \$1,144/month (two-bedroom), \$1,351/month (three-bedroom)

Contributors

- City of Toronto: low-interest loan; waiving of development charges and 20 years of realty taxes; and rent supplements for 30 units under the Private Landlord Program
- Ontario Ministry of Health: Rent supports for 13 units
- Natural Resources Canada: Commercial Building Incentive Program funding
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: waiving of mortgage loan insurance premium; and Canada-Ontario Affordable Rental Housing Initiative funding

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