

The importance of a dream team

Collaboration is growing in importance today for development projects as teams with expertise in architecture, interior design and outdoor landscapes come together to build magical spaces for people to live.

No. 7 Dale, a boutique project on the ravine in Toronto's Rosedale neighbourhood by developer Platinum Vista Inc., is the result of a symbiotic working relationship among Alessandro Munge, founder and design director of Studio Munge, Siamak Hariri, founding partner of Hariri Pontarini Architects, and Janet Rosenberg, founding principal of Janet Rosenberg & Studio.

Munge says a lack of collaboration "is a really good formula for a disastrous project."

"When people don't work collaboratively, you don't get a collaborative project. And here is what I've discovered in all the years in doing this. You know who feels it the most, right? It's the end user," Munge says.

"A collaborative process is one that works in all disciplines within the environment and is holistic to the people that use it. In 7 Dale, if we didn't understand what was going on with Janet Rosenberg's vision on landscaping, we wouldn't imagine our residential owners passing through those beautiful hedges, the perennials and all the things she's contributed. And then if we didn't understand what Siamak was doing with architecture, being so strong and so unique in its design ... then we wouldn't be able to do something that is cohesive to that process and to that vision that they started.

"Our interiors are really ones that pay homage to and respect the exterior components whether it be through materials, whether it be through views, whether it be a sense of restraint. ... It isn't overly flashy because it doesn't need to be."

Munge congratulates Platinum Vista for picking the team and says all three consultants set egos aside to work together for the greater good of the product.

"We had to create a product that was what we call a totalized experience," Hariri says. "And in that sense it was architecture, landscape and interiors really kind of coalescing into



No. 7 Dale, above right, couldn't have come together as a luxury boutique condo project without the collaborative efforts of, from top left, interior designer Alessandro Munge, architect Siamak Hariri and landscape designer Janet Rosenberg. IMAGES COURTESY OF NO. 7 DALE



Festival in Vaughan is part of Assembly Park, a master-planned community resulting from a partnership between Menkes Developments and QuadReal Property Group. MENKES IMAGE

a total coherent design.

"That was important to me, that it wasn't three players playing from a different song sheet. So, if you're sitting in your living room and looking out, you felt like the landscape was part of the experience and you felt like the room was organized beautifully from an interiors point of view. The glass and the view, every-

thing, was part of that experience. So it all feels like it's all one thing."

Hariri says developers are becoming more sophisticated and they expect more from all those involved in a project. "That means we just can't kind of say, 'Well this is my lane and that's your lane and as long as I stay within my lane I should be able to do what I want to do.' It doesn't

work like that anymore," he says.

Hariri likens the process to a jazz ensemble, which he calls "a very sophisticated form of collaboration."

"Jazz is where each person is playing at the very top of their game but the music ... somehow becomes enhanced by the other person. Everyone feels like they're part of the whole thing, but at the same time

there's enough room for individual expression."

Hariri says it was important that the trio also worked with the existing neighbourhood so that the project of 26 luxury condos fit into the community.

A dream team begins with a meeting of minds and a balancing of skills, says Nicole Langlois, marketing and development manager of Langlois Eco Homes, a family-owned firm that has built a set of townhomes just west of Woodstock in Southwestern Ontario.

"For us, building to the Passive House standard – a demanding and relatively unknown standard in the new home construction industry – required both depth of experience and the willingness to try radically new ways of building," she says.

"Prior to starting the build, we sent numerous team members and tradespeople to Passive House courses to learn the specific techniques, practices and materials required to achieve the Passive House standard. We felt confident, at every step, that we had a shared understanding of the process and a shared commitment to the goal of building something extraordinary.

"It's no exaggeration to say that each member of the design and construction team was vital to the outcome."

Often, a project can only come together when many parties work together successfully. Mimi Ng, senior vice-president of sales and marketing for Menkes Developments Ltd., says collaboration among key stakeholders such as politicians, tradespeople and real estate partners is key to the success of all of Menkes' projects.

"A perfect example of a development where collaboration was, and continues to be, critical is Festival in Vaughan. The project is part of Assembly Park, joint lands with our partner QuadReal," Ng says. "Communication is key. There are extensive stakeholder discussions and meetings where project visions and needs are expressed, and this happens over a long period of time. The pre-planning for Festival easily took two-plus years before we even launched for sale."