

IDEAS IN THE MAKING

THE EDDY

Windmill Development's Rodney Wills envisages an innovative low-rise that walks the walk with LEED platinum status, a rooftop veggie garden, homegrown art in the lobby and, of course, ample bicycle parking

BY PATRICK LANGSTON

THE PROJECT

Eddy: A name suggesting a neighbourly kind of guy who would help you out in a jam and probably wears flannel shirts.

The Eddy: A condo being built by Windmill Development Group in Hintonburg, where cool still rubs elbows, sometimes uneasily, with scruffy. The project, whose advertising campaign includes 20- and 30-something guys in flannel shirts, targets a young, urban demographic. "The hippest address in Ottawa's most happening neighbourhood," promises the project's website in slightly self-conscious fashion.

At just six storeys, the project is also an anomaly in a town where the race is on to build the tallest condo possible, ticking off entire neighbourhoods in the process.

THE LOCAL

The Eddy is going up on the former site of Ideal Motors at the corner of Wellington Street and Irving Avenue. That's within a stone's throw of the uber-popular Tacolot Mexican food stand, Hintonburger, and other must-visit eateries, clothing shops, and the like. The site is also a couple of doors down from Laundry Majestic, a laundromat/dry cleaners whose vibe is as unintentionally funky as its name.

The Eddy is also close to the Elmdale House Tavern, which has elbowed its way up from watering hole to live performance spot to what will soon be a second location for the Whalesbone Oyster House restaurant. Where the Whalesbone goes, can all-out gentrification be far behind?

The condo's name, by the way, is a spin on The Currents, an earlier Windmill condo project atop the Great Canadian Theatre Company in Wellington West. "This one's downstream from The Currents, like an eddy in a river," says Rodney Wills, partner in Windmill Developments. Hence, also, the logo: a stylized blue eddy that resembles a pincurl.

Units in the building will be named after rivers (Rouge, for example, after the west Quebec river) and historical Hintonburg figures (Crawley, named for Academy Award-winning film producer Budge Crawley who, for years, had a studio on Fairmont Avenue).

THE DESIGN

Ottawa-based Christopher Simmonds Architect has created a modern-themed building for the old neighbourhood. Its horizontal lines and unexpected projections, says Simmonds, accord with the scale and rhythm of the surrounding low-rise, horizontally oriented streetscape.





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Adds the firm's Rick Shean, the designer who transformed his boss's concepts into reality: "The building corresponds to the eclectic nature of the buildings in Hintonburg. It's a neighbourhood where you can afford to do something different."

That's a good thing, because the lot is certainly different: an awkward trapezoid with, says Simmonds, "crazy hydro lines everywhere."

Design constraints imposed by that shape are one reason the building's 57 units will include 27 different layouts. Which, coincidentally, is good: hipsters, according to urbanictionary.com, are a creative bunch who value independent thinking. That presumably excludes cookie-cutter condo units and helps explain The Eddy's advertising slogan: Why Go With the Flow?

Ottawa's Alblu team did the building's interior design and the sales centre. The latter includes a bicycle hanging on a wall, pedal power being emblematic of the building's target demographic.

As for the six stores, Wills says that the company just wanted to get along with everyone by sticking to the municipal community design plan for the area instead of battling for approval of a taller building.

Condos in the very green Eddy — it's shooting for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) platinum certification — start at \$192,780 for 378 square feet and rise to \$532,530 for just under 1,100 square feet.

THE GRAFFITI WALL

There's nothing carved in stone yet, but both developer and architect think a graffiti wall, possibly in the lobby where it would also be visible from the street, would encapsulate the building and neighbourhood vibe. "We're keen to do it, and we're starting to think about it," says Wills. "It's

part of our commitment to supporting local artists." Shean further notes that a graffiti wall would underscore The Eddy's reach for an urban loft feel.

THE SOCIAL EXPERIMENT

Hintonburg neighbours doubtless squabble just as much as the rest of us, but The Eddy seeks to be a place that, in Wills' words, builds community. The building's rooftop area is one way of doing that. While rooftop barbecues and dining areas are *de rigueur* in any contemporary condo project, The Eddy is planning to add vegetable plots for rent or purchase by condo owners. One imagines residents comparing notes on the best organic fertilizer and the length of their carrots, which is doubtless better than the distant nod you get from neighbours when you enter an elevator in one of those condominium towers around town.

THE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The campaign has the 30-somethings squarely in its crosshairs. Advertising and The Eddy's website, for example, spotlight young people kicking back and relaxing amid welcoming surroundings.

In one photograph, a fellow sporting a flannel shirt steers a bicycle with a smiling gal propped on the handlebars. Everything about the scenario is, if not illegal, at least downright dangerous: no helmets, riding double, bicycling on a sidewalk. But hipsters are independent folks, and that's who the ad speaks to. (Ottawa photographer Rémi Thériault, whose previous assignments have included lots of young musicians and other artists, was recruited for the ad campaign.)

Of course, there's no controlling who buys the units, and early purchasers unexpectedly included a number of baby boomers. "Well, they can be hip too," says Wills. **END**



AGAINST THE TIDE At just six storeys, The Eddy (shown, top, in an architectural rendering) bucks the current developer push for highrises. The awkward trapezoidal lot forced The Eddy's designers to get creative, coming up with an eclectic building whose 57 units will include 27 different layouts