

Ancient meets modern

- Historic condos are springing up on top of Toronto's old buildings
- Such developments represent the tug of war between preserving the city's heritage and moving forward



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Torontonians are experiencing the many examples of new condominiums built on historic sites: The Clear Spirit condos, integrated into the historic Distillery District, Omni Group's 1000-unit community, Garrison at the Yards near Fort York, and The Post House by Alterra, blending into the First Toronto Post Office, are all new developments built on heritage

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ARCHITECT LLOYD ALTE

sites.

An impressive example of this trend is the James Cooper Mansion by Tridel.

The original house was built in 1881 for wealthy manufacturer James Cooper and had long been home to the Knights of Columbus.

Tridel purchased the property in 2005 with plans to build a 32-storey condominium complex.

The remarkable heritage renovation involved physically moving the house to the edge of Sherbourne Street, which would become the largest residential structure relocation in Canadian history.

Architect Lloyd Alter is past president and board member of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario.

"For me, I give hats off to Tridel. It's not in the position where it was, but they've saved and restored and put to use, a terrific

building that will be there forever," he says.

The Residences at RCMI on University is a new condo project by Tribute Communities, currently in preconstruction at 426 University Avenue.

The 42-storey tower is scheduled for completion in 2013, and will house the new headquarters of The Royal Canadian Military Institute.

The RCMI has been a historical Toronto landmark since the original cornerstone was laid in 1907 by the Earl Grey, then Governor General of Canada.

Faced with a diminishing membership and a long list of expensive repairs, the Institute struck a deal with Tribute.

In June of 2010, the century-old building was finally closed to make way for the new development.

The RCMI will occupy

the first six floors of the building, with plans to retain the original façade and the two famous 19th-century cannons guarding the entrance.

Any alteration of a heritage property invokes a certain passion and controversy within the community.

The RCMI development is a quandary for Alter. "Is the public good served by the deal that was made there? Architecturally no. Socially, perhaps for the Military Institute, yes. And in this way, a collection and a library and meeting place is saved. It's a constant battle that we have, about what you do in a growing city, in a changing economy; what you can save and what you can't. A lot of historic preservationists will criticize me for saying that, but you've got to pick your battles."



► The James Cooper Mansion condo complex

LOBNE CHAPMAN



► Garrison at the Yards

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