

Raising kids in a downtown condo: Is it viable?

Apartment trends. 'Transit, infrastructure, amenities, public services, it all has to keep up and catch up'

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A common lament with the downtown Toronto condo market is the lack of larger, family-friendly units. What are your options if you're a young couple about to start a family?

Michael Stolberg, a realtor with TheRedPin.com online brokerage, says that it's quite doable.

"I'm doing it and I have many clients who do it. Some people keep two kids in a bedroom until they grow to a certain age and then I guess they have to think about moving to a townhome."

Two weeks ago, his wife

gave birth to a baby girl and they plan to raise a new family in their 1,200 sq. ft., two-bedroom plus one condo unit, located in a large Tridel building in Markham.

A plus one makes a great space for a kid's room. "My plus one is probably a little larger than my second bedroom, but you can't call it a bedroom because it doesn't have a window or a closet. Me, I gave up my second bedroom and gave that to my child and moved my office, couch and TV into the plus one," says Stolberg.

Brad Carr, the recently-appointed president of Canadian developer Monarch Group, says that in some areas around the city, builders are re-thinking their strategy and designing larger units with end-users in mind. "I think there are certain places where we might see the emergence of more family product quicker as opposed to some of the core downtown locations where it's still serving a very

specific segment of the market."

A major concern for parents is the availability of nearby schools and daycare. In some communities, there's just no room left in the local schools to accommodate kids from the new developments. Carr says it will take time for the infrastructure to catch up.

"While the Toronto condo emergence has felt like a very long time, in the grand scheme of things we're still in the early stages of this conversion from more suburban living to more downtown living. All the things we talk about so much, of transit, infrastructure, amenities and public services, it all has to keep up and catch up."

Watch for new partnerships between schools and developers, as in the case of North Toronto Collegiate and Tridel's Republic condos. The 100-year-old school needed a facelift and sold land to Tridel in exchange for a new building incorporated into the condo complex.



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