

CONDO LIVING

HOME TECH

New app helps buyers see condos

Interactive tool provides a comprehensive look at every aspect of a new home

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Anyone who has ever purchased a condo before knows the amount of legwork that can be involved in going to visit different buildings.

It usually involves a lot of driving around town in rush-hour or weekend traffic, only to be disappointed by the view or the layout.

Prospective condo buyers may have to repeat this exercise five to ten times or more before they find their perfect home. Well now there's an app for that.

Toronto software developer 3D Condo Explorer Inc. has recently

announced an expansion of its virtual reality offerings to real estate brokers and agents. The popular web-based service is built upon the Google Earth foundation and offers condo hunters a comprehensive look at prospective properties, right from their own computers.

In what is called The Virtual Alternative, the web portal has been expanded to provide accurate and impartial information for the resale condo market. "It's like the best atlas, neighbourhood tour, floor plan, and bird's-eye view, all in one place," says CEO and company founder Alexander Neshmonin. "Thanks to our partnership with Google Earth, we've tapped

into a platform the buying public already knows and trusts."

The application provides a comprehensive look at every aspect of a prospective new home, including the entire neighbourhood around it. A lavishly rendered 3D representation of every detail is available to prospective purchasers, including surrounding buildings, nearby TTC stops, schools, restaurants, highways and the suites themselves.

Neshmonin says that the Canadian real estate market is still operating in a 1990s model and is behind the times when it comes to the reality of a constantly-connected world. They wanted to go a step further than the linear, text-based records available with the MLS. "This is a 3D world now. This is The Virtual Alternative."

Neshmonin, a 25-year veteran of the IT industry who has worked with blue-chip hi-tech firms such as Novell, Matrox and ATI, says that

expectations are changing. "These days, young people especially, wouldn't even go to a restaurant without checking it online first."

Director of marketing, Subarna Gupta says that 80% of condo purchases are done after researching online. "Who's buying today? Who is our customer? They are the Gen Y, the young couples. They live and breathe technology, and mobile devices are their life. They live in a virtual world. And here we are trying to sell the condominium with minimal information online. We felt that we needed to make a shift. We need to provide them with what they're looking for."

Neshmonin has engineered the application to mimic the field of view that the human eye sees, so when viewing the screen, you're seeing a representation of the actual view from the condo balcony. The program uses special algorithms that calculate the dif-

ference in view depending on what floor of the building you're on. The difference of two or three floors says Neshmonin, could be the difference between an excellent view and a terrible one.

The application works with an inventory of current buildings showing resale condominiums available. For preconstruction, the application shows a ghost image of the finished building, so you get a sense of what your view will look like after construction is complete.

"What we have done with the interactive 3D listing, we are creating a 3D MLS," says Gupta. "You're not just getting information about how many square feet, how many bathrooms and so on, but it actually gives you what is around, what would be your view when you stand at that window." The company was founded in 2010 with headquarters based in Toronto and currently employs 17 people.



3D Condo Explorer director of marketing, Subarna Gupta with CEO and company founder Alexander Neshmonin. "It's like the best atlas, neighbourhood tour, floor plan, and bird's-eye view, all in one place," says Neshmonin.



3D Condo Explorer will also provide a birds-eye view of the surrounding neighbourhood.