



# Quartz & Spectra – Concord CityPlace

by ROBIN BRUNET

Developers of residential high-rise complexes are faced with the same problem: how to prevent the high-rises from looking like the monolithic cluster of towers that are all too prevalent in every Canadian city.

Such was the case with Concord Adex Investments Ltd. and RAW Design with regards to Quartz and Spectra, part of Concord's CityPlace in Toronto.

Like its namesake, the 41-storey Quartz is multi-faceted in its design even though it retains the basic structure of a high-rise building. Augmented by a distinctive podium and intricate geometric exterior surfaces, Quartz contains residences with contemporary finishes and glass panels that maximize light and available space. "Think of Quartz as a crystal," says Brian Fong, Concord's senior manager, project marketing. "It will transform the southern light into a prism of colour. It's truly remarkable."

Quartz's sister, the 39-storey Spectra, is instantly identifiable by vertical colour bars that define each side of the building's vibrant facade and run horizontal upon reaching the podium. "We've designed Spectra to be a landmark that embodies colour, light and shifting elements," says Fong.

Spectra's seven-floor podium features floorplans ranging from 438-square-foot bachelor spaces to three bedroom units of over 1,000 square feet. Like Quartz, its tower units range from one to three bedrooms, have colourful finishes, sliding glass panels that replace traditional walls and sliding doors instead of standard doors.

The master-planned CityPlace has been years in the making, and prior to Quartz and Spectra thousands of high-end

condominiums and apartments had already transformed Toronto's former Railway Lands. Roland Rom Colthoff, principal of RAW Design, has been collaborating with Concord for the past decade, and in the CityPlace region he and his colleagues were responsible for the West Harbour City and LTD mixed-use condominiums.

But it was the success of RAW's work on the Panorama and Discovery towers that compelled Concord to ask the company to design towers for its last two CityPlace blocks. Panorama's success is partly due to a unique egg-shaped floorplan and a podium clad in continuous horizontal lines of black brick and ribbon window, curving to follow the line of Lakeshore Boulevard. For Discovery, located in north Toronto on a site with a 15-metre change of grade, RAW created three distinct urban precincts to accommodate different phases of community development.

Colthoff and Concord studied the Vancouver model of "podium-style" residential tower development in their quest to make Quartz and Spectra true visual showcases. "It became clear early on that while the base podiums would be important to both buildings, we had to be careful that the bases related properly to the surrounding streets," says Colthoff. "Simply put, we didn't want the podiums to be huge and imposing, as is the case with some towers in the vicinity of CityPlace."

The solution was to move away from an orthogonal approach to design and embrace the use of shifted angles as well as (especially for Quartz) a multi-block/multi-layer style of podium development, which not only provides a unique visual appeal but also a more permeable pedestrian realm.

For the towers themselves, RAW came

up with what it calls a "fractured geometry" that allows for facades to be oriented to specific views and "defer to existing view corridors while using a subtle axial shift to link the buildings together." The cumulative effect is towers whose faces can best be described as consisting of "chiseled geometries." RAW was also mindful to avoid casting shadows onto the adjacent Fort York and the play area of nearby Canoe Landing.

Because of the sheer size of both towers, creating a user-friendly community-oriented ambiance at ground level was a key consideration. Concord and RAW allowed for open public ways to bisect the site, linking Canoe Landing to Fort York and a new pedestrian bridge north on Dan Leckie way, south to the lake. This serves to extend a pedestrian network and strong organizing axis, which begins at Spadina Avenue.

Additionally, a small community centre with a 15-metre pool, a half gym and yoga, fitness, party and movie venues were developed to be shared by both towers; extensive retail areas at grade were created to help connect CityPlace to the neighbouring urban zone of Bathurst Street.

IBI Group was called upon to develop working drawings and preside over permitting, tendering and construction. "There's always a concern with a project of this scale that the modifications required to make everything functional will substantially change the original design, but fortunately that was not the case with Quartz or Spectra," says Titka Seddighi, IBI Group associate.

Excavation on both towers commenced in 2011, and EllisDon Residential Inc. began detailed excavation in July

of 2012. "Frankly, Quartz and Spectra proved to be very straightforward to construct, plus we had three unassumed roads surrounding the site, which made for minimal site logistics issues," says Ed Caranci, senior project manager. "If only the weather had been as accommodating."

Caranci is referring to a 2013/14 winter when wind chills were so severe that they cost EllisDon over 70 lost weather days. "Pouring concrete slopes in these conditions was brutal, and we missed our main milestone dates," he says. "But Concord took everything in stride and rescheduled." At peak, over 300 workers and tradesmen were on site.

Quartz and Spectra are the capping triumph of a development that has already brought badly-needed revitalization to a section of downtown Toronto, and a statement issued by Concord Adex summarizes this achievement in appropriately poetic terms: "Concord CityPlace anchors downtown west to the city's southern border at Lakeshore Boulevard; it is the light that infuses the evening and reflection that greets the morning skyline. Its towers define the neighbourhood." **A**

**LOCATION**  
75 Queens Wharf Road, Toronto, Ontario

**OWNER/DEVELOPER**  
Concord Adex Investments Ltd.

**ARCHITECT**  
Page + Steele/IBI Group Architects / RAW Design

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**  
EllisDon Residential Inc.

**STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT**  
Read Jones Christoffersen

**MECHANICAL/  
ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT**  
MCW Consultants Ltd.

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**  
DTAH

**INTERIOR DESIGN**  
Figure3

**TOTAL SIZE**  
700,000 square feet

**TOTAL COST**  
Undisclosed