

# IMPERIAL PLAZA RESIDENCES



## RESTORING THE HISTORIC LANDMARK IMPERIAL OIL BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO



Imperial Plaza, located at 111 St. Clair Avenue West, will be the dramatic retrofit of the former headquarters of one of Canada's largest corporations (circa 1950's). Inspired by the Rockefeller family, Camrost-Felcorp has brought to the market a project unlike any other in the City of Toronto.

Imperial Plaza will be a masterpiece of mid-century International Style and Modernism. Introducing to Toronto a one-of-a-kind experience of condo living, the carefully restored condo residence will have rich historic roots. Perched above the City of Toronto on the Forest Hill escarpment, Imperial Plaza will undoubtedly be **what Toronto looks up to.**

The landmark property is the vision of award-winning development team Camrost-Felcorp, well respected for residential landmarks across the Greater Toronto Area including The Avenue – just steps from Imperial Plaza.

President and CEO, David Feldman's passion for the neighborhood and the project is unparalleled as he plans to preserve and echo the palette and space of the mid-century period building. "I've lived in this neighborhood for

over 25 years, and this particular property is near and dear to my heart. You simply cannot buy a piece of history like this anywhere else in Toronto, or even Canada."

The building is clad in a limestone façade, with a granite and marble lobby, extra-ordinary 10' to 30' ceilings, and welded-frame construction.

Features of the building include a limestone exterior, 24-hour concierge service, retail shops, an extensive

### YOU SIMPLY CANNOT BUY A PIECE OF HISTORY LIKE THIS ANYWHERE ELSE IN TORONTO, OR EVEN CANADA

recreation and entertainment area called the Imperial Club. The grand marble clad lobby features an artistic masterpiece by York Wilson; described by A. Y. Jackson as, "one of the finest murals Canada has ever seen." There is a reception lounge that leads into the striking outdoor landscaped lounge area. The Imperial Club offers cutting edge amenities including a fitness centre spanning 11,000

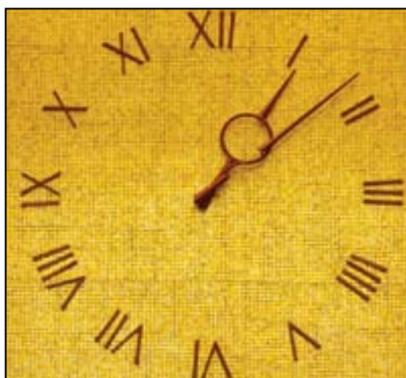
square feet, aerobics and yoga studios, pool and hot tub, spectacular change rooms, squash and basketball courts, movie theatre room, games room, media room, golf simulator, and a sound studio for playing music.

The residential suites will be outfitted with extraordinary 10' to 16' ceilings, custom designed modern kitchens with built-in appliances and stone kitchen counter tops, large operable windows and unprecedented views of the city.

Furthermore, Imperial Plaza will offer luxurious 'Sky Penthouses.' These three-level Penthouse Suites and large Rockefeller Suites, at the top of Imperial Plaza will have their own express elevator access and will be priced up to \$7,500,000.

A strong response to the pre-opening campaign, from both brokers and potential purchasers, has created a flurry of reservations and registrations at the Imperial Plaza, indicating that this is a project destined to sell quickly.

**For available listings and floor plans, please contact [sales@imperialcondos.ca](mailto:sales@imperialcondos.ca) or visit the Presentation Gallery at 111 St. Clair Avenue West. 416-925-2501 [imperialplazatoronto.com](http://imperialplazatoronto.com)**





## BRINGING A LITTLE MAD MEN TO ST. CLAIR WEST



In the award-winning television drama *Mad Men*, dapper 1960s Madison Avenue advertising executive Don Draper doesn't just wear his thin-lapelled suits well, he wears the period's luxurious yet minimalist interiors like a veneer of mid-century cool.

Fifty years ago, corporations routinely created bricks-and-mortar manifestations of their philosophy and mythology: Airport buildings grew wings, coffee shops were glassy, democratic and welcoming, and banks and insurance companies were solid, stony places that reassured.

The Imperial Oil building at 111 St. Clair Ave. W. was such an edifice. From its glassy, two-storey lobby with a dramatic and brooding two-panel mural depicting *The Story of Oil* by Ronald York Wilson, the building turned into a pillar of strength as it travelled skyward.

Inside, materials such as Loreda Chiaro marble, travertine, book-matched mahogany and gold mosaic tile projected an image as substantial as the massive Royal Bank of Canada safe in the lobby, as if the whole thing had been carved out of the Canadian Shield. In short, it was an environment the fictional Mr. Draper could have lapped up like single-malt Scotch and worn like a mohair suit.

So, when the building was vacated in 2004 and put up for sale a few years later, many of its fans feared it might become as anachronistic as the fedora.

But the fedora is back in 2010 and so is the Imperial Oil building: "I live in the neighbourhood and I've been driving past this building for many years and I've thought this would be a great location," says David Feldman, president and chief executive officer of Camrost-Felcorp, about the restoration and condo transformation campaign his company is about to mount after purchasing the building less than two months ago. "It's going to be a lot of fun."

"There are few opportunities for conversion like this in the city," agrees chief architect Rod Rowbotham of Onespace Unlimited, fresh from delivering breezy lakeside living with Camrost-Felcorp's iLoft and California Condos. Helping Mr. Rowbotham achieve the perfect balance of mid-century Madison Avenue and 21st-century condominium chic are other heavy hitters: "Designer Guy" Matt Davis of the Design Agency will collaborate on interiors; David Pontarini of Hariri Pontarini

will design a new tower that will sit perpendicular to the original building at the rear of the lot (to preserve the sweeping views to the south); and landscape architect Janet Rosenberg will eradicate asphalt for sexy-cool green space.

It's the start of a new chapter for a building already rich in history.

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The Mathers and Haldenby design was to be built, originally, as Toronto's new city hall in 1955. When that idea was rejected in favour of an international competition (ultimately won by Viljo Revell in 1958), the plans were purchased by Imperial Oil and altered for the St. Clair West site.

No expense was spared: State-of-the-art elevators, double-pane aluminum windows with sealed Venetian blinds, a gold-tiled, domed-roof rotunda leading to a 19th-floor executive boardroom and a wraparound rooftop observation deck were just some of the deluxe features.

It took five years of planning for Imperial Oil to move from seven different downtown offices to the midtown building when it was completed in 1957. The globetrotting artist, Mr. Wilson, stayed put for three years planning and painting the two 32- by 21-foot panels with two assistants (the largest ever painted at the time; Group of Seven alumnus A.Y. Jackson called it "the finest thing of its kind ever done in Canada").

In a scant two years from now, condo seekers with a budget in

the \$300,000s will be able to buy a little piece of this history: "The idea is to introduce this neighbourhood to those that can't afford this neighbourhood," Mr. Feldman says.

Non-residents, too, will have the opportunity to sit and savour that lobby, since the plan is to entice a high-end restaurant, café or retail shop to the ground-floor space.

Mr. Davis notes that the Royal Bank safe, which "isn't going anywhere," would make for a fantastic wine cellar. Because of the way the lobby unfolds, the 400-plus suite owners will simply walk through security doors underneath an enormous clock floating in a sea of (what else) gold mosaic tile to the bank of elevators.

About a week ago, I had the pleasure of meeting the *Mad Men* of St. Clair West - Mr. Feldman, Mr. Rowbotham, Mr. Davis and Mr. Pontarini - for a walkabout. What encouraged me was that even these seasoned veterans of design were in awe of the building's materials palette and workmanship.

Mr. Davis stressed that "the vocabulary of the design" for new suites would echo that palette and the furniture in the public spaces would be from the mid-century period.

While there was no trace of the mural by Painters Eleven member Oscar Cahen in the eighth-floor cafeteria (Mr. Rowbotham promises to keep looking), the playful mural of fish, birds, oil wells, pine trees and the Imperial Oil Building itself by Sydney H. Watson (principal of the Ontario College of Art, 1955-1970) is still there, and Mr. Feldman is trying to figure out how to cut it down and reassemble it elsewhere for the public to enjoy.

Unfortunately, that amazing observation deck - at almost 800 feet above sea level, it was the highest lookout in the city when it was built - won't be going public. Those views will belong to a privileged few owners of new three-storey "town homes" that will populate the top three floors of the building priced in the millions of dollars. "If people want to see [the view], maybe they have to be invited over for a drink," Mr. Feldman laughs.

Make mine a gin martini with a twist, then ... or whatever Mr. Draper is drinking.

# IMPERIAL ROOM



Reduce, reuse, recycle.

Revive, respect . . . remarkable.

David Feldman says he's always avoided "cookie cutter" projects. With Imperial Plaza, his company's revisioning and redevelopment of the dynamic former Imperial Oil headquarters, the CEO of Camrost-Felcorp Ltd. is taking things to new heights.

"Everything I've done in the past has led me to this project," says the developer of upscale condos such as The Avenue, the lakeshore's Mystic Pointe and the World Trade Centre on Yonge St. at Queens Quay. But his ambitious plan to convert the 111 St. Clair Ave. W. office building to condos is a rarity in Toronto, especially on such a grand scale. This is no teardown and rebuild the "magnificent existing structure" will be retained and reimagined, treated with the "respect and reverence" it deserves, says project architect Rod Rowbotham of OneSpace Unlimited. For Feldman, a passionate supporter of Canadian art and a developer for more than 30 years, this might be his masterpiece.

canopy of the Deer Park neighbourhood laid out below and the downtown skyline splashed across the horizon.

Even the northern vistas are postcard-worthy. With ceilings of 10 feet and more throughout, generous 6-by-8-foot energy-efficient windows and space-enhancing layouts, the 400-plus units will have an airy, open feel. Those annoying bulkheads for ducts and other mechanicals, won't be an issue, the developer promises. The spacious original ceilings allow Camrost-Felcorp's designers to place those necessities out of sight.

So, how much will a piece of the sky in such a unique setting, on the cusp of Forest Hill, set you back? Feldman says his "dream team" of designers has created a 530 square-foot, one-bedroom unit that will start in the \$300,000s. The crowning touch will be a halfdozen three-level luxury townhouses with a dedicated elevator. They will be priced at \$3 million or more.

CALL IT EXPLORATORY surgery. Transforming the Imperial Oil building into the new Imperial Plaza condo project will be "like operating on a live patient," says Rowbotham. "When you have

The eastern end will be home to a coffee bar, "for the community and neighbourhood at large," he adds. The stately lobby remains home to three giant clocks, still ticking. "Clocks were very important," says Designer Guys' Matthew Davis, who is tasked with seamlessly meshing the Mad Men-era decor with a modern, internationalist feel. The principal of The Design Agency will bring that same esthetic to the project's generous amenities. Plans include 25,000 square feet of amenities, spread over two levels: a large indoor pool, golf simulator, entertainment lounges, steam rooms, two screening rooms, squash courts, soundproofed music rooms, a 1,000-square-foot private workout area and massive 11,000 square-foot fitness centre. The ninth floor, with ceilings of 16 to 18 feet, is home to a vast collection of old-fashioned air-exchangers and heavy-duty piping, brightly painted in hues of green and blue and yellow.

"That will all be cut up, removed and recycled," Feldman says. In its place will be two-storey lofts. One floor up, the entire 10th level has been stripped back to the bones, laying bare the robust welded steel framework, a sturdy skeleton. Here, with no partitions, you can appreciate the vastness of the building's footprint. Further testimony to the impressive workmanship – in many of the fire exits you'll find not barren concrete but terrazzo flooring, brass fixtures and solid-wood handrails.

On the 20th floor, at one time the oil barons' executive level, it's all about the view: a breathtaking panorama, Toronto The Good laid out before you. The only perspective that will rival this one will be from the luxury "sky towns" Feldman plans to add upstairs. The outdoor amenities haven't been forgotten as almost two acres of gardens and landscaping will be overseen by landscape designer Janet Rosenberg. And architect Rowbotham will leave his signature at the rear of the building, where a large, two-storey canopy will provide a welcoming main entryway.

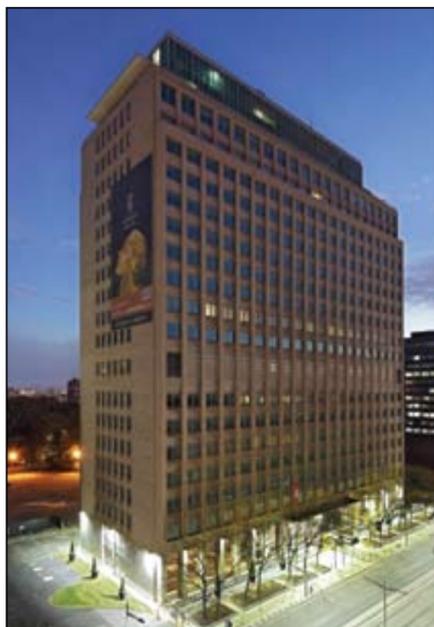
Nearby, a new multi-level parking garage will provide a physical link between the Imperial Plaza and a future second phase tower. Rowbotham's 60-by-60-foot canopy will be a continuation of the original architects' vision, one that's "sympathetic to the existing structure but complementary," he says. "We'll be defying gravity a bit more." There have been a few commercial-to-condo conversions attempted in Toronto, but none on this scale. Rowbotham hopes that changes.

"So many older buildings get pushed aside for bigger, better, faster – which sometimes is necessary. But not always," he says. "I hope the development community looks very seriously at the opportunity" for more conversions.

After more than three decades in the development business, the Imperial Plaza holds a special place in Feldman's heart. For years he'd driven past the location and often imagined the possibilities. Now he's making them a reality.

"This is going to be great for the neighbourhood," he says. "We're going to bring this part of St. Clair alive again."

**For more information, go to [www.imperialcondos.ca](http://www.imperialcondos.ca) or call 416-484-4375.**



From left to right, architect Rod Rowbotham, developer David Feldman and designer Matthew Davis pose in front of the famous York Wilson mural.

## DAVID FELDMAN AND HIS TEAM WILL TAKE MAD MEN-ERA BUILDING AND MAKE THE IMPERIAL PLAZA ONE OF TORONTO'S HOTTEST ADDRESSES

His canvas is the 20-storey Mathers and Haldenby-designed edifice, a building that could have been Toronto's city hall. With its stunning Indiana limestone exterior and wide-open stone lobby, it was deemed too expensive for a civic project. The barons of Imperial Oil knew differently and, with their backing, a star was born near St. Clair and Avenue Rd.

THE SCALE OF Feldman's project is massive. Each floor boasts almost 20,000 square feet of space, he says. The existing lobby – with its enormous York Wilson "Story of Oil" mural, Italian marble walls and floors and 35-foot ceilings – is nearly the length of a football field. And the views. The Imperial building sits atop an escarpment and is "the building Toronto looks up to," Feldman says with a smile.

Thanks to its perch, even from the lower floors the southward views will be among the most picturesque in the city with the tree

an existing, iconic building with such a distinctive history, it has to be handled with a great deal of respect," the architect says. "All features of value and significance have to be protected."

The conventional construction process can be aggressive, knock 'em down, drag 'em out. "But here you have to stop and think about how you're going to get large equipment into the building or how you can do no harm" to the existing structure. All that original workmanship makes the Imperial building "unique and special," notes Mark Warrack, chairman of Heritage Toronto's conservation committee.

"It's a good example of a Modernist-style building. The excellent craftsmanship and detail also talks of an era when corporations put a lot of time, money and effort into producing an iconic building to represent their company and brand," he says.

"The superb quality of the materials really makes it stand out, even more than its design," Warrack says. It's a level of workmanship and material "that you really don't see any more. The limestone cladding probably looks as good today as when it was built." He's pleased with the plans to reinvigorate the structure, especially if Camrost-Felcorp is able to create an inviting ground floor "public streetscape that everyone can enjoy."

IMPERIAL OIL DECAMPED to Calgary in 2004 and touring the nowempty building is a step back in time. Besides the lobby's York Wilson mural, a large old bank vault remains. Perhaps it will become a wine cellar in the restaurant planned for the west end of the main floor, Feldman says.



# BUILT TO LAST

Imperial Plaza will cater to a condo owner's every whim while respecting its storied past

BY MARTIN SLOFTSTRA  
Editor, New Homes and Condos



It's hard to say what's most impressive when you take a walking tour of the Imperial Plaza, which sits on the south side of St.

Clair between Avenue Road and Yonge Street.

Is it the massive, two-panel mural masterpiece "The Story of Oil" painted by York Wilson that greets you as you enter the lobby?

Is it the panoramic views of the entire city from the top floor of the 20-storey building which is further enhanced by its location atop an escarpment?

Is it the sheer size of the building? Each floor is almost the length and width of a football field.

Already much has been made of the Imperial Plaza - its distinctive Mad Men-era, mid-20th-century architectural style; its potential to be one of Toronto's hottest addresses (when complete in spring 2013); and that it is one of the most ambitious commercial-to-condo restoration projects ever undertaken in the city of Toronto.

The driving force behind the project is David Feldman, president and CEO of Camrost Felcorp.

For all its storied past, Imperial Plaza needs to connect with today's condo buyer. "I want to liven up St. Clair Avenue," Feldman says modestly.

Feldman's vision is for it to fit into the neighbourhood, and his 30 years in the business seems to have prepared him for this - his biggest challenge yet.

It's not just about heritage and location, he says, citing "the base of the building, the landscaped terrace with outdoor café, the amenities area including pools, media rooms and fitness areas" are all designed with today's condo buyer in mind.

The entry-level unit will be a 530 sq. ft. one-bedroom starting in the \$300,000s, culminating with a half-dozen three-level "sky towns" that will be priced in the millions.

Amenities aside, wherever possible, the design team will endeavour to retain classic features.

"It's a great building with a great structure, and it's got a timeless quality to it in a neighbourhood that is vital," says chief architect Rod Rowbotham of OneSpace Unlimited. "I think that

any opportunity to maintain an iconic building should be respectful in design to the era in which it was created."

To accomplish that, the building will retain its opulent exterior and interior finishes such as polished granite throughout, a marble lobby, its limestone exterior and floor-to-ceiling glass coverings. Certain features, such as the stately lobby, home to three large clocks, will be preserved.

Charged with ensuring the feeling inside the units is Matthew Davis, principal of The Design Agency. Keeping the look pure and clean with a precise use of symmetry makes for "timeless style," he says, adding great pains will be taken to carry that style into all of the condo suite's elements including kitchen counters and bathroom fixtures.

But for all the bluster, the building's past is too hard to ignore. Its design was originally proposed in 1955 (by Marani and Morris, Mathers and Haldenby, Shore and Moffat architect firms) as a new 20-storey Toronto City Hall at Bay and Queen - that plan rejected because it was deemed too expensive to build before Imperial Oil rescued it and turned into its head office at its St. Clair location.

As quoted in the Imperial Oil Review in June 1957, Imperial staff architect Keith Duckworth said, "We have built it to last. In 200 years, the air conditioning will be out-of-date, and the elevators old-fashioned, but the building should still be standing - and we hope, in use."

It's unlikely the original designer had a residential condo in mind, but then again, it hardly matters. This classic 55-year-old building has been given a new lease on life.



Under construction in 1955.



The three-storey 'sky-towns' at the top of Imperial Plaza offer a panoramic view of the Toronto skyline.

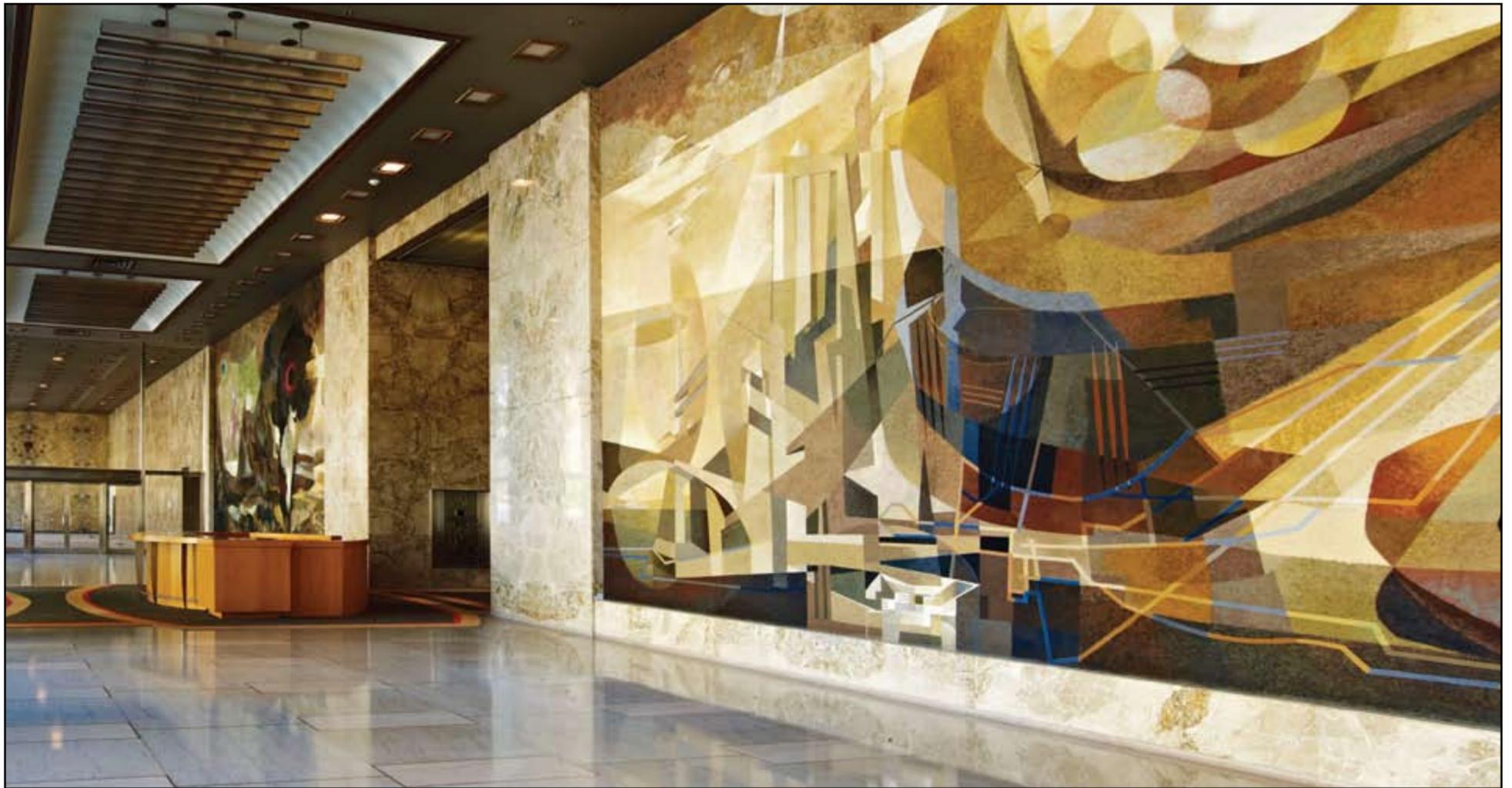


Plans call for an inviting European-inspired ground-floor streetscape that everyone can enjoy.



Two classic York Wilson murals will greet residents and visitors as they enter the lobby.

# FOR CITY SLICKERS



York Wilson's massive murals, which A.Y. Jackson lauded, grace the Imperial Plaza's lobby.

BY JENNIFER FEBBRARO,  
National Post



"Imagine having a martini up here," says David Feldman, the visionary CEO of Camrost-Felcorp, on the 20th floor of

the former headquarters of Imperial Oil. "Here we will have our sky towns." Mr. Feldman is referring to the three-level penthouses with private elevator, which, when built, will be valued at about \$3-million. They represent the steep end of the Imperial Plaza condo structure ([imperialcondos.ca](http://imperialcondos.ca)). Here, patrons can purchase a 510-square-foot piece of history, beginning in the low \$300,000s.

Mr. Feldman casts his hand across a vast, sun-drenched stretch of gravelled roof. On it, he imagines families, professional couples, and even himself, gracing the future patios of this underrated and underused rooftop. Surrounding Mr. Feldman are panoramic views of the city, seductive enough to make any foreigner fall in love with Toronto at a single glance. It's hard to believe this building has been empty for almost six whole years, from the time Imperial Oil relocated to Calgary in 2004.

The building itself, commissioned originally in the 1950s by the Rockefeller family, owners of Exxon and by extension Imperial Oil, was constructed with the foresight that it might one day be iconic. Located at 111 St. Clair Ave. W. at Avenue Road, the stunning example of mid-century modernism is a one-of-a-kind structure. Sheaths of Italian marble line a football-field-sized lobby. In the centre, a clock marks the time against a huge wall of gold-leafed mosaic tiles, each as tiny as a pinky nail.

The grandeur of the building's entrance is enhanced by two murals painted by famed Canadian artist York Wilson. Created over a period of three years during the building's construction, the art chronicles the past and future of the oil industry. A.Y. Jackson of the Group of Seven recognized its significance, saying, it was "the greatest thing of its kind ever done in Canada." The presence of these paintings alone — 21x32-feet each — make owning a share in this property akin to owning a piece of Canadian art history.

The 23-storey structure is by far the most impressive condo retrofit Toronto has seen to date. Designed originally by Alvan Mathers of the renowned architectural firm Mathers and Haldenby, the building once competed to be erected as Toronto's City Hall at

Queen and Bay. But the cost of such a structure was deemed too expensive — and so we have Nathan Phillips Square, the result of an international design competition.

At Imperial's completion in 1957, it attained the stature of a Toronto landmark, given that it was — at that time — the tallest building in the city. Residents will also benefit from the building's location. Raised on the city's escarpment, a suite on the 20th floor is the equivalent height of a 40th-floor apartment downtown.

The building's current architect, Rod Rowbotham of OneSpace Unlimited, says respecting the past was integral to the project. "For a typical architectural project, the land is your canvas," he says, "but for the Imperial Plaza, an extraordinary canvas is already there. So the challenge is figuring out what to dispense with and what to maintain." Mr. Rowbotham marvels that this is the largest all-welded steel-frame structure in Canada. So solid was the structure that it was allocated as a bomb shelter in case of nuclear attack.

"The challenge for this building," Mr. Rowbotham says, "is that in this particular case, we need to integrate the 400 or so suite designs within the existing structural system. Because it is a steel-frame building, we need to ensure that the layouts don't interfere

with the steel columns and steel beams." A tour of the building reveals a layout of offices, the walls of which soon will be cleared for one- and two-bedroom divisions.

On the top floor, the remnants of the president's office of Imperial Oil remain untouched. A small labyrinth leads to the shockingly extravagant all-marble bathroom, a secret luxurious room from the Mad Men era. One almost expects Don Draper to turn a corner.

For the 20,000 square feet of space available on each floor, Mr. Feldman rallied The Design Agency to create interiors that meld the '50s esthetic with modern-day luxurious living. Designer Matt Davis says the project was a pleasure. "It's such an incredible building to begin with," he says. "We wanted to create suites that are classically modern, yet incredibly warm and livable, with all the elements of design honouring the large windows and, ultimately, the breathtaking, expansive views."

Kitchens feature integrated panels that neatly conceal appliances, enabling a smooth flow into the living room. Quartz countertops provide a clean, streamlined surface, while back-painted glass cabinets continue the modernist feeling and are a nod to the latest European trend. For the wide-planked flooring throughout, buyers

can choose from walnut, French oak or whitewashed oak.

Amenities at Imperial Plaza will be just as high end as the suites. They include concierge service, an indoor pool and whirlpool spa, two squash courts with viewing area, a 10,000-sq.ft. fitness auditorium, a yoga/Pilates studio, a golf simulator room, two screening rooms, an outdoor furnished fireside patio with gas barbecues and a multi-purpose games room.

But residents won't be the only ones privy to the premises. Mr. Feldman plans to convert the lobby into a retail and commercial space "for everyone to enjoy." A large bank vault originally used by Royal Bank of Canada may be converted, for example, into the wine cooler of a future restaurant on the main floor. The bank inhabited the building for a brief period of time — leaving behind the monumental safe.

It's rare to find such a gem in the city. What's noteworthy to future condo developers is that the property didn't need to be demolished to maintain — and even increase — its worth. "We're hoping to be an inspiration to future developers," Mr. Rowbotham says. "Toronto has so many gorgeous mid-century buildings." Old Rockefeller would probably shake Mr. Feldman's hand for his decision to transform the past into a profitable future.