

10 minutes with... Camrost-Felcorp's David Feldman

BY KARA KURYLOWICZ

FROM A PURELY BUSINESS POINT OF VIEW, DAVID FELDMAN LIVES AND breathes great buildings, yet this highly successful entrepreneur, the president and CEO of Camrost-Felcorp Inc., has a soft spot for certain iconic buildings such as the former Imperial Oil headquarters (Yonge St. and St. Clair Ave.) and the legendary Four Seasons' hotel tower (Yorkville Ave. and Avenue Rd.).

As a real estate developer who has lived in Toronto's Forest Hill neighbourhood for many years, Feldman has plenty of personal insights into consumers' deep affection for a downtown urban lifestyle that puts them as close to their workplaces as to superb arts, entertainment, dining and retail.

"Here we have two buildings that are anchored in outstanding geographic locations – one is at Yonge and St. Clair since the 1950s, and the other on Yorkville and Avenue Rd. since the 1970s. But as our company has discovered, Torontonians also have a real emotional connection to these buildings because they represent a part of their personal history in these Toronto neighbourhoods," Feldman says, who has had his own nostalgic moments after driving along St. Clair, spending time in Yorkville and hosting a number of family functions in the Four Seasons hotel building. "People have a real affection and a deep respect for the former Imperial Oil headquarters and Four Seasons hotel building."

Consumers are keen to own a piece of these two buildings that are respectively a tribute to mid-century modernism and brutalist-style

architecture, and that also have a powerful connection to wealth and luxury. For example, the Imperial Oil headquarters, built in 1957 by New York City's Rockefeller family who spared no expense, boasts a limestone façade and welded steel frame. Its dramatic two-storey polished marble lobby is home to York Wilson's massive masterpiece "Story of Oil" which the Group of Seven's A.Y. Jackson declared one of the finest pieces of art that Canada has ever seen. During construction in one of the city's most prestigious and influential neighbourhoods, Imperial chose to weld its metal framework rather than jackhammer hot rivets into steel, which helped reduce the noise in what was primarily a residential neighbourhood, even in those days.



PICTURED LEFT
The retail component, located in the podium of Yorkville Plaza

PICTURED OPPOSITE PAGE
David Feldman, president and CEO of Camrost-Felcorp Inc., at Imperial Plaza

SNAPSHOT

NAME OF DEVELOPER

Camrost-Felcorp Inc.

KEY MESSAGE:

"Wherever I am, I find great ideas and bring them home to Camrost-Felcorp developments."
–David Feldman, president and CEO

WHY CAMROST-FELCORP?

Camrost-Felcorp's David Feldman, president and CEO, has been actively involved in the real estate business for more than 40 years. Today, Camrost-Felcorp's impressive portfolio includes over 8,000 residences and more than 1 million sq. ft. of office and retail space.

Under Feldman's leadership, the company pioneered "mixed-use" development in the Greater Toronto Area, creating vibrant communities that include office space and shopping areas to enhance the quality of life for its residents.

Camrost-Felcorp's notable revitalization projects include the conversion of the legendary Four Seasons hotel building on Yorkville and Avenue Rd. into the New Residences of Yorkville Plaza and Imperial Plaza, which will transform the former Imperial Oil headquarters at St. Clair and Yonge into a prestigious residential address.

Previous conversion projects include the Kings Court condominiums at King and Sherbourne, where the company restored a CIBC heritage façade as well as the Bishop town homes, which had been built back in the late 1700s.

CURRENT

Imperial Plaza at Yonge and St. Clair, New Residences of Yorkville Plaza at Yorkville Ave. and Avenue Rd., California Condos at Mystic Pointe in Etobicoke

COMPLETED

The Avenue, Private Condominium Residences, Forest Hill, 9T6 Condominium Residences and Kings Court in downtown Toronto. The Madison Centre and the Gold Sculpted Royal Bank Building at Yonge and Sheppard. The Savoy in Don Mills, The Palace and Manor Gates in Mississauga, One Glen Park in midtown Toronto. Award-winning waterfront developments from The World Trade Centre at the foot of Yonge St. to the award-winning Marina Del Rey in south Etobicoke.

As Feldman notes, it was and still is a "solid" building with thick walls and reasonably sized windows that were appreciated by civic leaders during the Cold War era.

"As much as I admire and respect these buildings for their history and architectural legacy, there is a practical aspect to our conversions," says Feldman, who points out that Camrost-Felcorp will strip the Imperial Plaza and Four Seasons hotel buildings right down to their façades and bare bones, then install brand new interiors and mechanicals so that buyers reap the benefits of fresh, modern finishes, floor plans and amenities as well as the most current and energy-efficient technology. "The locations are perfect for high-end, luxury residences, but we also recognize that no one could afford to replicate this level of construction today. In addition, it's part of our commitment to sustainability because we keep so much out of landfill and preserve resources, such as stone, by retaining the buildings' basic structure and envelope."

Meanwhile, in the late 1970s, the Four Seasons hotel was a catalyst that saw Yorkville's gradual evolution from a village for hippies and coffee houses to a world-class, luxury location for people who appreciate the very best. Whether or not consumers are familiar with the Four Seasons hotel building through personal experience, most Torontonians at least know of it because it so frequently hosted headline-making celebrities such as Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey, Madonna and the Rolling Stones.

As much as Feldman has deep roots in Toronto, he and his wife Angela Feldman, executive vice-president of Camrost-Felcorp, are frequent flyers who regularly visit the world's best cities, including Chicago, Madrid, New York and Paris. While he and his wife are viewing superb art in private collections and public museums, Feldman is always on the lookout for more. For instance, while visiting a high-end condo in Chicago recently, Feldman photographed a variety of intriguing and impressive architectural details, including the window sills. Why record a simple window sill? For inspiration's sake! Feldman liked the way the AC system had been built into the 18-inch high, deeper-than-average window sill, which could then serve as a small shelf for something special, such as a sculpture or favourite photo.

"Wherever I am, I find great ideas and bring them back home," says Feldman, who loves to travel but when in Toronto, will always ensure that he never is more than a 30-minute drive from any project site. "I've travelled to numerous urban centres to identify and be inspired by the best. This knowledge has helped make Imperial Plaza and Yorkville Plaza neighbourhood landmarks that are unique all the way up from their signature architecture, location, interior spaces and city views."

