

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2014 SECTION H

CE ON2

Madonna brings the sweetener



STEVE RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR

Aura Condos resident Derrick Lai works out at the building's 42,000-sq.-ft. Hard Candy Fitness as Riz Dhanji, vice-president of sales and marketing for Aura builder Canderel Residential, looks on. Madonna, in the wall art, will be at the gym Tuesday for its grand opening.

Madge in T.O. for grand opening of Hard Candy Fitness at Aura Condo

IAN HARVEY
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Madonna's got some Hard Candy to sweeten the deal for prospective buyers at Aura Condominiums, and she'll be in Toronto Tuesday to add some perspiration to that inspiration.

That's Hard Candy Fitness, as in the fitness centre which occupies 42,000 square feet and will have its grand opening on the fourth floor of what is Canada's tallest condominium at Yonge and Gerrard Sts.

HARD CANDY continued on H6

"No one has to wait . . . there's spin, yoga, steam rooms and an amazing juice bar."

RIZ DHANJI
CANDEREL
RESIDENTIAL



HARD CANDY FITNESS

Madonna leads a class at Hard Candy Fitness in Berlin, Germany.

Love Condos gets to heart of Chinese community

'Because I'm a newcomer, I understand,' says builder

NEIL SHARMA
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Love Condominiums aims to engage residents with the world just outside their lobby door and the things they, well, love.

"Love is being built in a neighbourhood surrounded by services and organizations that cater to the growing Chinese community," said Yan Wang, vice-president of Gemterra Developments Co., builder of the Scarborough highrise. "Simply walk a few steps and residents can shop at Agincourt (Mall), or enjoy a delicious meal at one of the many Chinese restaurants located nearby.

"Love is more than a condo building, it's a community," added Wang.

Located on Bonis Ave., near Kennedy Rd. and Sheppard Ave., the two towers plus townhomes will be located near Pacific Mall and the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, both the largest of their kind in North America.

Moreover, the entire neighbourhood itself is an amenity with nearby doctors' offices, law firms and other services for the community.

Even Love Condominium's sales centre has Mandarin and Cantonese speaking receptionists.

Guanning Yi and her fiancé, Stephen Hilchie, purchased an 800 square-foot, two-bedroom suite at Love because the neighbourhood, building and price suited their needs as first-time buyers. While Yi has lived here for nearly four years, having moved from China, she says the multicultural character that includes a large Chinese community in and around Love Condos is a bonus.

The couple were initially unaware the building would cater to the Chinese community but say they enjoy that aspect.

LOVE continued on H10



>> HOMES & CONDOS

Material Girl will lead upcoming workout

HARD CANDY from H1

The Material Girl is an investor in the club which not only feature cool, modern exercise machines and equipment but is also chock full of exercise programming and covers everything from abs to cycling to spinning to yoga.

"Madge" is no virgin when it comes to fitness clubs and has been investing in and extending her brand to Hard Candy, right down to the choosing the name. She'll personally lead an "Addicted to Sweat" workout Tuesday with some 50 participants who have been brought in, winners of contests held at the other Hard Candy clubs around the world, at the Grand Opening event.

"They've been practising for months, getting all the dance steps in the routine down," said Annick-Isabelle Marcoux, president and CEO of the Toronto club. "It's exhausting. No wonder she's in such good shape."

Leonard Schlemm, chairman and co-owner of Hard Candy Fitness Toronto, said while Madonna doesn't invest in all Hard Candy Fitness clubs personally, she has in Toronto "because it was on her wish list of favourite cities. She's always felt welcome in Toronto."

Hard Candy was founded in 2010 as a partnership with Madonna and New Evolution Ventures, itself created two years earlier in San Francisco. The co-founders of NeV, Mark Mastrov and Schlemm are icons in the fitness business. They began in 1983 with a \$17,000 investment in a small California gym and went on to build an empire which they later sold for more than \$1 billion. Their experience spans more than 800 clubs and over one million members in 20 countries.

Schlemm, also a runner and cyclist, and based in Montreal, and said the partnership with Hard Candy is the first in Canada and adds to clubs in Rome, Sydney, Santiago, Mexico City, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Berlin. He has also partnered with Canadian basketball legend Steve Nash in a chain of B.C. Fitness Clubs.

Schlemm recently married Marcoux whose love of sports and fitness as an alpine ski racer, former national champion mountain- and road-biker and Ironman competitor led to her current role with Toronto's Hard Candy, and Club Athletic Mansfield and Club Atwater in Montreal.

Marcoux said some 60 per cent of Hard Candy's programming is based on Madonna's concept and Tuesday's big launch event will feature a series of live DJs and other artist performances, including the creation of a graffiti mural.

With 19-foot floor-to-ceiling windows surrounding the gym and overlooking Yonge St. and Dundas Square, it's light years away from typical condo gyms.

It is, however, in keeping with developer Canderel Residential Inc.'s strategy to stand out in the

Riz Dhanji, vice-president of sales and marketing at Canderel, said they



HARD CANDY FITNESS

Hard Candy Fitness in Mexico City opened three years ago with Madonna in attendance to lead a class.

"(Madonna) says everything is better when it's hard, especially bodies"

ANNICK-ISABELLE MARCOUX,
HARD CANDY FITNESS

initially considered the traditional route of selling the space back to the condo corporation and letting them run it.

Putting in just anything, however, wasn't going to work for Canderel or Aura, he added, and that's what led to the partnership with Schlemm.

"I've never seen anything like this," says Dhanji. "It's massive. No one has to wait for a machine, there's spin, yoga, steam rooms and an amazing juice bar."

Notes Josh MacLean of Urbanation, a condo market analytics firm, gyms are in the top three demands of new condo buyers.

"Top three across all demographics,

> AURA

Location: 388 Yonge St., Toronto
78 floors; 985 units

Builder: Canderel Residential Inc.;
Graziani + Corazza Architects
Partially occupied

Still under construction: Executive
units: \$1,458 sq. ft., \$1.25 million;
penthouses, 2-bedroom and 2-

bedroom-plus-den, 900 sq. ft., \$1
million to \$3.75 million; top floor,
11,379 sq. ft., from \$18.3 million

Other amenities: Two-storey glass
enclosed lobby; 5th-floor landscaped
rooftop; guest suites; 9
high-speed elevators; 24-7 concierge;
180,000 sq. ft. of retail.

buyers want a multi-function party room to entertain large groups, outdoor space like a terrace or rooftop and they want a gym," he said.

What they don't want, though, is a fitness centre tucked away in a windowless room with entry-level equipment that is not maintained and not enough room to accommodate the number of residents who want to work out.

The changing demands of buyers are driving developers to step up their game and that opened doors for

Hard Candy.

Aura Condo residents get a membership as part of their maintenance fees. Non-residents can also join for a membership fee and sign up for programs on a pay-as-you-sweat basis.

Condo owner Derrick Lai already loves what he has seen, and experienced, since the soft launch back in October.

"Getting Hard Candy was a bonus," said Lai, an architect who has just hung out a shingle with his own firm, Prop. "The view is great and it's not a



At Yonge and Gerrard Sts., 78-storey Aura is Canada's tallest condo tower.

utility space — it really makes you want to use it."

He has a one-bedroom-plus-den suite with about 700 square feet and adds that after living in three condos over five years, he said it's a welcome change to see a fitness space which is not just useable but inviting.

What Hard Candy Fitness and Aura represent, says Mark Stables, CEO of Movement Haus, which specializes in designing, installing and operating fitness centres in condominium buildings, is a tipping point in the market place.

Simply put, Madonna's Hard Candy is in vogue.

Stables has fitness centres in 60 buildings, most in Toronto but a couple in Miami and he's next aiming for New York City.

"A lot of the buyers are moving in from the 'burbs and they don't have the money to pay for personal trainers and fitness clubs," he said. "So they want group classes at their condos.

"It's also social for them and a chance to meet their neighbours and have a sense of community."

He adds that while many developers have picked up on the trend and are incorporating fitness centre designs early in the process, "You have to understand the demographics and actually live in condos to get it, and some still don't," he said.

As for Madge herself, she's never been shy about exposure or making a spectacle of herself. It's also nice to know that all is forgiven and that T.O. is back on her on her "love you baby" list (with credit to singer Robbie Williams). It was here in 1990, according to news reports at the time, that Toronto police investigated Madonna's Blond Ambition tour performance over obscenity concerns.

Madonna (Louise Veronica Ciccone), who includes "no sweat, no candy" as one of her mantras, also came up with the name for the chain of fitness centres.

"Hard Candy comes from Madonna," says Marcoux. "She says everything is better when it's hard, especially bodies. I don't think I can go much further than that."