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WATERSCAPE ON THE GRAND: SUSTAINABLE, LUXURY URBAN LIVING IN HISTORIC DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge area named [the best place in Canada](#) to buy a home or invest in real estate

CAMBRIDGE – The new [Waterscape](#) condominium development on the Grand River in [Cambridge](#) has turned an environmental liability into an environmentally friendly community asset, sparking a chain of events that is transforming the city’s historic downtown core.

“Waterscape is an innovative project for an innovative, high growth region,” says Paul de Haas, president of the [Haastown Group of Companies](#), which specializes in developing unique living spaces that breathe new life into underutilized properties and neighbourhoods in Ontario.

Waterscape’s site — at the gateway to the picturesque, limestone-built former city of Galt — was an empty eyesore for nearly three decades before de Haas spotted its potential in 2004. He has spent more than five years working with the community to create a development that supports Ontario’s [Places to Grow](#) and [brownfields](#) strategies.

This fall, residents will begin moving into the first of two, 12-storey, 115-unit buildings planned for the site, injecting new life into the downtown. They will enjoy luxury suites, many with river views; the top-floor Water Club, including a fully equipped fitness centre and terrace for entertaining; and an increasingly vibrant urban lifestyle in a natural setting, including walking trails, river activities such as kayaking, shopping, restaurants and entertainment.

“You’ve got to give credit to Paul for taking on this huge task,” says Cambridge Mayor Doug Craig. “It’s been an empty site for approximately 30 years because of environmental contamination that no developer would touch. Waterscape is a major factor in the revitalization of the core area. We want to populate the downtown and reinforce all the activities it offers, from restaurants to theatre, and Waterscape is one of the anchors.”

Waterscape residents will also benefit from several other developments now under way in downtown Cambridge, including:

- an \$18-million [performing arts facility](#) and headquarters for [Drayton Entertainment](#), opening in 2011;
- a \$5-million refurbishment of the former Riverbank Mill restaurant steps from Waterscape, opening in the spring of 2011; and
- the redevelopment of historic buildings on Main Street.

“Waterscape is an example of a positive approach to the intensification of downtown areas,” says Rick Haldenby, director of the [University of Waterloo’s School of Architecture](#), which is located in the Cambridge core. “We need to make cities better places for people to live in collectively. This project moves in the right direction.”

Haastown decided to move Waterscape closer to the river and rotate the building to follow the water’s edge after local architecture students prepared a 3-D model of the initial plans and held two workshops. The result is a building more in harmony with its setting and more units with river views.

Innovative building materials for more comfortable, energy efficient living

Waterscape residents will also live in a building that is “stronger, more energy efficient, healthier, more comfortable and more environmentally friendly” than other condo developments, says de Haas.

- Waterscape is built with [NUDURA insulated concrete forms \(ICFs\)](#), which are highly energy efficient and provide a superior sound barrier for quieter living quarters. Made of polystyrene foam and reinforced concrete, including recycled materials, NUDURA ICFs perform at levels as high as R-50 compared to the standard R-20. They also contribute to high indoor air quality — they resist mold formation and don’t emit harmful gases.
- Soil and geological conditions also required unique foundation technology: more than 700 helical piles installed by Breslau-based [EBS Engineering and Construction Ltd.](#) Waterscape is one of the first buildings of its type in Ontario to use these piles, says Dino Vito, EBS vice president and general manager. They make installation vibration-free and don’t bring underlying soil to the surface.

“We spent a considerable amount of time consulting engineers and designers to create an innovative building from the ground up,” says de Haas. “It’s a more expensive type of construction but well worth the investment.”

For Haastown, projects like Waterscape “are a responsible way to build. We find a great deal of interest and challenge in the redevelopment aspect of a property and a building over a simple development opportunity. We have carved a niche in the marketplace because we have the patience and the tenacity to capitalize on the potential of these challenging situations.”

The Haastown Group of Companies focuses on revitalizing heritage and underutilized properties in Ontario for residential and commercial use. Recent projects include: The Boiler Factory Lofts and The Knitting Mill in Toronto, the Mill Lofts in Guelph, and The Lofts on Mansion in Kitchener.

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