

New in Homes & Condos

»TORONTO STAR«

SECTION H
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LABOUR DAY

No longer is this the weekend marked to close up the backyard barbecue, **H8**



GOODWILL HUNTING

Colin and Justin talk decor with a Toronto filmmaker, **H4**

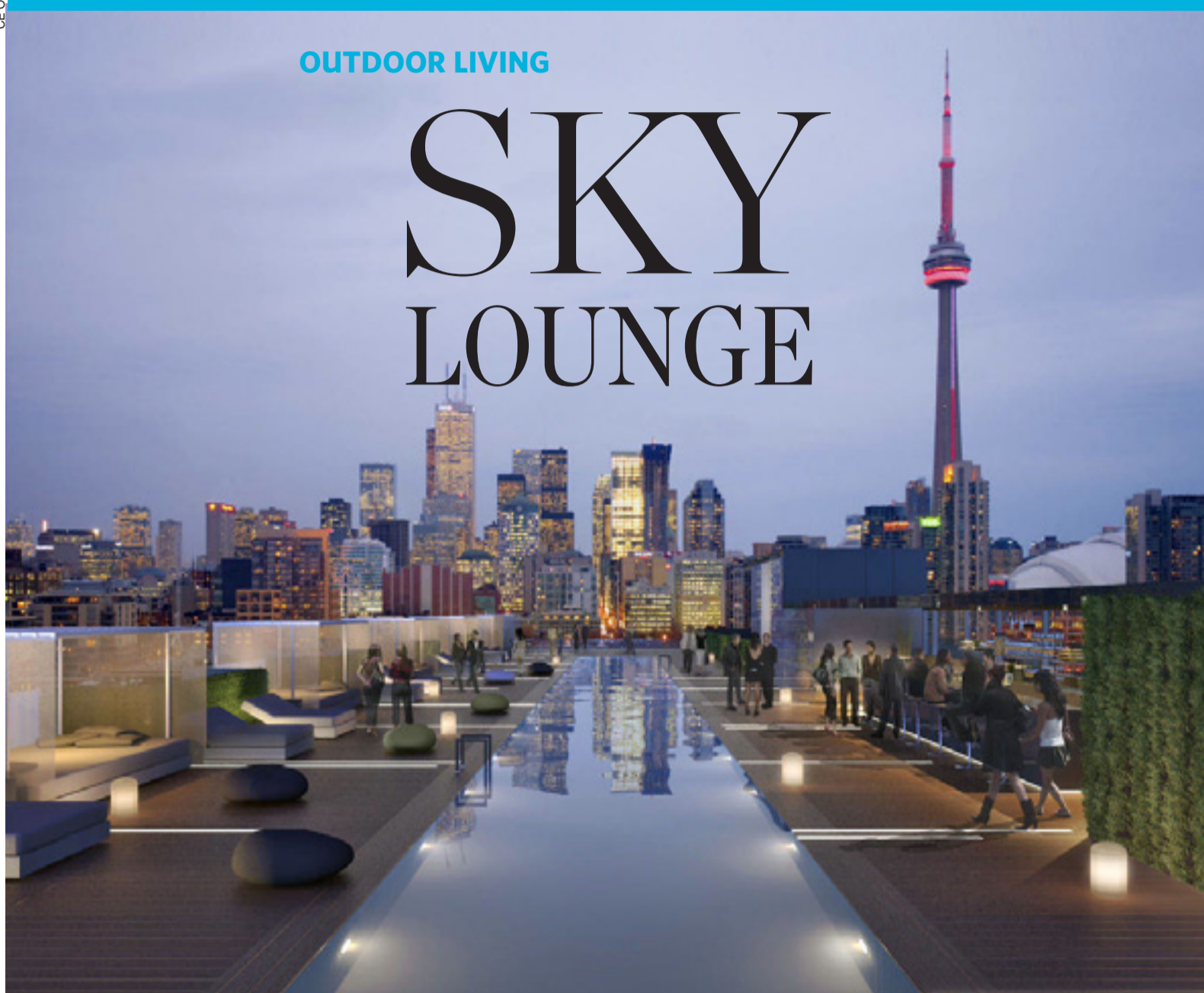
Top 10 New Home Buying Tips



Tarion.com

OUTDOOR LIVING

SKY LOUNGE



The Thompson Residences by Freed Developments will offer stunning views, a bar and one of North America's longest infinity pools.

Developers are offering a lot more in the way of luxurious outdoor amenities to lure in potential buyers

DONNA LAPORTE
STAFF REPORTER

On a sultry summer afternoon, sculpted bodies loll on comfortable loungers and covered cabanas high above the fray, chatting on cellphones or listening to music, seemingly oblivious to the workaday world below.

Nearby skyscrapers tower above, a stunning backdrop to the new playgrounds of the hip, young inhabitants.

Welcome to the new world of condo living, where outdoor patios and rooftops are the new club scene. These are not your parents' condos.

Outdoor pools, misting stations, water features, bars and barbecues — everything you could want without leaving home.

It's a Staycation with a capital S; everything's kicked up a notch.

"Smaller spaces require what used to be called a café society in order to function properly," according to Gary Silverberg, developer of Art Condos on Dovercourt Rd. in the trendy West Queen West neighbourhood.

OUTDOOR continued on H8

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Armstrong: Queen of Mississauga

Urban dance star, choreographer loves her suburban lifestyle

RITA ZEKAS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Tré Armstrong is queen of urban dance on *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*.

So you'd think she would be the definitive downtown chick. But you'd be wrong. Armstrong lives in a house in Mississauga.

Mississauga? Say what? "I grew up down the street," explains the actor, dancer, choreographer and social activist.

"I like bunnies, deer, green grass, trees. I want serenity. This is as close to Jamaica I can get unless I move to The Beach."

ARTIST continued on H8



Tré Armstrong is a judge on *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*.

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Bold Exterior



Open Concept Kitchen



Actual View from 14th Floor

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HOMES & CONDOS



The Globo lights, left, have been a hit with customers at Fiber Living, while the Kindle propane-fuelled outdoor heater is shaped like a table lamp.



HOT HOME PRODUCTS

See you after September

No longer does Labour Day mean packing up the outdoor barbecue or closing the swimming pool

VICKY SANDERSON
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Remember when Labour Day marked a seasonal divide that came with hard and fast rules, including a directive to banish white shoes to the back of the closet?

In recent years, that abrupt shift has blurred, in part because warmer weather now frequently lasts into October. It's a change being welcomed by outdoor furniture designers and retailers, such as Andrew Bockner of Andrew Richard Designs (www.andrewricharddesigns.com). "It used to be that if good weather hadn't come by mid-May, people would just let it go and stick with whatever outdoor furniture they already had. And it all seemed to end around this time. But since it's staying warm into September and beyond, people are more willing to invest, even later in the season, in creating a cottagey feel at home," he explains.

Ion Nicolae, who along with Michael Guerra, owns Fiber Living, a new outdoor living store on Berkeley St. agrees that the summer season has been stretched (www.fiberliving.com). "We expect to have strong sales well into October," says Nicolae. Find out more about this new store by reading Rita Zekas' Storegazing profile at <http://bit.ly/nZbO5H>.

Homeowners who want to spend fall evenings outdoors should consider installing a pavilion with cur-

tains, which Bockner says will add two or three degrees to the immediate air temperature. For added warmth, his customers are also snapping up Kindles, propane-fuelled outdoor lights/heaters that look like over-sized indoor lamps, the success of which caught Bockner by surprise. "I looked at these \$2,000 heaters and thought that my Canadian customers would not go for them, but they are loving them," he says.

Nicolae has had a similarly positive response to stylish outdoor lighting. His clients loved the Globo, round electric outdoor lights made out of polyethylene that come in a variety of sizes (starting at \$325 for a 30-centimetre model), made by Italian design firm Slide (www.slidedesign.it).

Both Bockner and Nicolae agree that while the trend over the last few summers has been to create outdoor furniture and accessories that mimic their interior counterparts, the next step will be furniture that can work inside or out.

For once, I'm in step with a trend. The French provincial settee that sat unused in my basement for two decades is currently at Masterpieces Studio (www.masterpiecesstudio.com) being reworked as an outdoor piece in marine-grade vinyl fabric and metallic leaf finish sealed for exterior use. Look for the reveal at the Toronto Fall Home Show (www.fallhomeshow.com).

In furniture, Bockner sees a con-

tinued movement away from formal dining arrangements to conversational settings, fuelling sales of a 24-inch high coffee table designed to offer an alternative to a traditional 29-inch dining table or 17-inch coffee table.

Few things will keep the spirit of summer more alive than an outdoor meal. If an old tired grill is stopping you from al fresco dining, it's not too late to get a new one. Take a look at the Stok Quattro grill (www.stokgrills.com), which is new to Canada and exclusively available at Home Depot (www.homedepot.ca) for about \$400. (Go quickly, though, as supplies may be dwindling.)

I love the Stok I tested for several reasons, not the least of which being that it's a four burner grill that comes with interchangeable cooking plates (two grill grates, a pizza stone, a griddle and a veg tray), as well as a handle for inserting and removing the plates. Wok, chicken roaster and kabob and rib trays are also available, with prices starting at about \$20. This means you can start a barbecue off with, for example, a simple flatbread appetizer and move on to other dishes with a minimum of fuss. Other features include a stainless steel hood, porcelain-coated firebox and electronic grilling. For

The Stok grill comes with interchangeable plates.

more recipes and tips, go to my blog at www.thestar.blogs.com/onthehouse/

An enclosed "outdoor room" opens up year-round possibilities for dining, lounging and gardening, and homeowners in southern Ontario now have a new option for creating one.

Lumon, a Finnish company that has been making beautiful, retractable glazed glass balconies and terrace rooms for three decades, has just set up shop in Cookstown.

There, the company — a market leader in Europe — will custom make frameless glass balconies and porches that work with sleek and unobtrusive aluminum tracks and panels.

For more information, go to www.lumon.ca.

Contact Vicky Sanderson at vswwriter@sympatico.ca and follow her on Twitter @vickysanderson.



The best of the great outdoors

OUTDOOR from HI

Art's fifth-floor outdoor patio is designed to have plenty of intimate seating areas, so that some people can have privacy while others entertain on the large banquettes.

"We started with a fire pit and a glass beach," he says. "The idea was to make the space year-round, to make extensions of rooms that would allow socialization."

In summer, there's a hot tub with showers nearby.

He credits 3rd Uncle Design, which revamped the Drake Hotel.

That club-like vibe is what Mark Reeve, a principal in Urban Capital Property Group, was trying to achieve with Boutique One and Boutique Two, on Nelson St. in the city's core.

"One of the decisions we made early on was to capture the style and flavour and experience of living in a boutique hotel — without all the hotel guests."

Such hotels have beautiful roof terraces, he says. Although he could have put penthouses in that very valuable space, he chose not to.

Condos are no longer a fallback for those who wanted houses, says interior designer Anna Simone, a partner in Cicconi Simone. People live in them differently now, she says. They don't want to compromise on outdoor living, whether it's on their own balcony or in a shared space.

The roughly 6,000-square-foot amenity space at DNA3 on King St. W. is going to be on the second floor, "which makes you feel like you are literally in a tree house," she says.

Riz Dhanji, vice president of sales and marketing for Canderel Residential, which is building DNA3, says marketing that space really paid off in sales. "People really took to it."

There will be four to six barbecues, day beds with shaded covers, loungers, trees and shrubbery. Water features are another popular attraction and DNA3 will have a misting station, which allows people to cool off easily.

"Dhanji isn't fond of outdoor pools, saying they're expensive to maintain.

Developer Peter Freed feels differently. He says that rooftop pools were uncommon six years ago when he started putting them in. Most of his downtown projects have them.

"People just love them," he says. "There's a certain feeling about swimming on top of a building that, until you do it once, it's just incredible."

You only have to scope out the outdoor pool on the 16th floor of the Thompson Hotel, with its jaw-dropping city views. Residents of Freed's 550 Wellington St. W. condo have privileges there, as he built both projects.

His Thompson Residences will have one of North America's longest infinity pools.

Andrew Bockner, owner of Andrew Richard Designs, started designing furniture for hospitality and boutique hotels. So far, he has outfitted 25 to 30 outdoor amenity spaces in condos, with more in store.

He's seen a real surge in the past four or five years, from utilitarian use of space — with picnic tables and barbecues — to settings such as at Cresford Developments' CASA, on Charles St. E., with its "Tuuci" Stingray umbrellas made of marine-grade fabric with polished titanium, loungers, a heated year-round outdoor pool, cedar slat arbour, two-sided gas fireplace and double barbecues and prep area.

"The feedback that we've got is unbelievable," he says. "Every project that we're getting, whether it's the same builder or not, want to do better for their potential buyer."

Maria Athanasoulis, Cresford's vice president of marketing and sales, worked with Bockner to design custom loungers accented in yellow and grey based on some she saw in Europe.

And the ante keeps climbing. Of One Bloor, whose amenities Simone is designing, she says emphatically: "They are beyond words."

Queen of the Dance is master of her suburban life

ARTIST from HI

She and her man, musician Michael Pope, whose group In Essence won the Juno for R&B/Soul Recording of the Year for their CD *The Master Plan*, have been there over a year.

The house has three storeys, four bedrooms, a family room, dining room, kitchen, and a nice big backyard.

"We are slowly renovating," she explains. "Basement, kitchen, backyard... don't even talk about the backyard."

They are redoing the walls in the dining room and family room and tiling the kitchen in a black, sleek style. There will be a workout room and dance studio downstairs in the basement.

"Because the house is in renovation mode, we are sequestered in her living room, which she calls the quiet room because they don't live in it.

It is her sanctuary. Her two cats aren't even allowed in and her frenetic Yorkshire terrier Diamond is permitted but supervised. He is so friendly, there is a danger of death by licking.

The "sanctuary" walls are taupe green and the furnishings are white: a white leather chaise lounge and matching couch. The bottom of the glass-topped coffee table replicates the style of the chaise.

"The coffee table is the reason I bought the whole set," Armstrong explains. "When they told me the price of the set it was 'ouch.' Okay,



VINCE TALOTTA/TORONTO STAR

Tré Armstrong, choreographer and judge on *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*, with Diamond at her home, which is undergoing renovations.

the salesman said. 'I'll take out the table.' I said, 'no sale.' So he gave me a discount. The grooves on the side of the coffee table give it texture and attitude. I like attitude in my furniture. This is my quiet attitude room."

There is a fabulous black-and-white patterned recliner/rocker which has a designated purpose.

"It's where I will rock when I have babies," she says. She is in her "dirty 30s" so there is time.

"This chair was my inspiration for the room," she explains. "She describes her decorating style as "all over the place."

"It's more grassroots, earth tones, bamboo, greenery," she says. "I love Asian fashion and style and am in-

spired by it."

Armstrong was born in Toronto and lived in Parkdale until she was 4. At 19, she moved back to Parkdale, attending dancing school while working as a loan official at the Royal Bank.

She's been dancing since age 5. She originally wanted to be Canada's first black ballerina.

"My teacher said, 'Give it up. No one looks like you,'" she recalls. "It was better that I focus on jazz, funk, hip hop and the world of entertainment. Film and TV is where I lie."

Her choreography credits include *Save the Last Dance*, *Repo: The Genetic Opera*, *Shall We Dance* and countless videos. She played the lead in *How She Move*.

Armstrong took ballet for 12 years;

tap for eight years; jazz for three years; hip hop over a dozen years and also trained in breaking, dancehall and ballroom.

In addition, Armstrong pursued salsa and meringue because she was determined to discover why Latin dance was so sexy, studying at the Latin Club at the University of Western Ontario, where she also took Food and Nutrition.

It was never meant to be her life's work but has worked wonders on her body: on a recent *SYTYCDC*, she totally rocked an unforgiving bandage dress from Herve Leger.

Her surname fits her to a t-shirt: Her arms are legendary, cut enough to make Michelle Obama take to wearing long sleeves.

We'll have whatever she's having. "I do the P90 workout system. It is so simple — in 10-minute workout segments," she insists.

(The Power 90 is a system where each movement targets a specific zone for maximum fat-burning and toning for 30 minutes a day.)

She teaches dance twice a week in Brampton (at Deborah Thomson) and has established A New DAEL, her own dance academy for the entertainment industry.

She's also established the Tré Armstrong Give Back Foundation, which provides accessibility to dance and performance art to youth in underfunded communities. Her website is www.trearmstrong.com.

The fourth season finale of *SYTYCDC* is Monday, Sept. 12.