

POSTHOMES

NATIONAL POST
SATURDAY,
APRIL 24, 2010

NP

nationalpost.com

Find your home
at nationalpost.
com/homes

CONDOS

NORTH YORK

Why buyers
love it here.
PH6

RENOS

UGLY DUCKLING

From beastly
to beauty,
\$185,000 later.
PH8

DEALIOS

\$2.4-MILLION

This dwelling is
contemporary,
light, bright and
envy-inducing.
PH12

Gary Silverberg, the developer of ART condos on West Queen West, courts homebuyers with a blog and a contest aimed at photographers and filmmakers. TYLER ANDERSON / NATIONAL POST

THE NEW DEAL

SECOND OF TWO PARTS

In a tightly cut video just over two minutes long, we learn the brunette bombshell lounging on white leather is a Canadian model whose resumé includes a Victoria's Secret credit. Drum and bass set the soundtrack while subtitles make it look like a high-fashion magazine spread: We know who designed the dress, the cuff, the heels; the shoot's stylist was named "One to watch" by *Women's Wear Daily*; the shoot's location was trendy King West resto Spice Route.

It's eye candy, an ad within an ad, and while it doesn't have much in common with condos, it's just another way of using social media to sell real estate. The video is part of the hype campaign for the newest development by Canderel Stoneridge: DNA3 condos in King West Village, breaking ground this summer. It was posted to YouTube in February and has since racked up 812 views (full disclosure: I watched it twice). The idea is to take viewers behind-the-scenes at the photo shoot for DNA3's billboard ads — which haven't even debuted yet. "It shows people the process of creating the campaign," says Riz Dhanji, vice-president of sales and marketing at Canderel Stoneridge. "They get a little insider knowledge, and it makes them feel like a part of it."

Social media sites like Twitter,

Facebook and YouTube speak directly to DNA's target: Young, wired downtowners with iPhones stuffed into the back pockets of their super low-slung skinnies. "For the first two phases of DNA, we held live chats on the website where sales associates walked people through an online presentation," Mr. Dhanji says. "We're creating a new site for phase three this summer that will host live Q&As with sales reps on our Twitter feed."

This is targeted, efficient communication. "Social media goes far beyond what a print ad can do," says Matthew Slutsky, president and founder of buzzbuzzhome.com, a Toronto-based website that lists new condos and homes and helps real estate developers augment their online marketing strategy. "The traditional print ad for a condo development — a lifestyle shot of a couple holding hands on a beach — doesn't open a conversation."

Savvy, critical consumers don't want to be advertised to — they want access to information and they want to talk back — and be heard. "It's not enough to simply open a sales centre and hope people will find you," says Danny Roth, president of Brandon Communications, a boutique PR firm in Toronto's Liberty Village with a roster of real estate clients. "Along

STATUS continued on PH5

STATUS
UPDATE:
SOLDForget For Sale signs, nine
out of 10 homebuyers start
their search online

By Lauren Ferranti-Ballem

You bought that luxury home for how much? Better get bidding online pronto

Going once, going twice! It's auction fever time. On May 2nd, international real estate investment and services company Kennedy Wilson and Buss Marketing are conducting an auction of 55 luxury home sites at MonTerra at Cochrane Lakes, Alta. Low starting bids ranging from \$90,000 to \$220,000 on homes previously priced from \$240,000 to \$680,000 offer credible savings. The luxury

MAY 2 IS AUCTION TIME

properties are part of a private, 640-acre estate community in the foothills of Cochrane, Alta. Every site is at least a quarter acre (many are lakefront). MonTerra features 240 acres of natural lakes and wetlands, open spaces, woodlands and spectacular views of Alberta's Rocky Mountains.

And it's just a 20-minute drive from Calgary in Southern Alberta. Click on MonTerraAuction.com to learn how to participate and bid online. *National Post*



LOVED THE VID, BOUGHT THE DIGS

STATUS

Continued from PH1

traditional advertising and PR, social media is just another tool in a comprehensive communication strategy."

Before making a big purchase — and a condo is one of the biggest — shoppers do their homework online. In fact, nine out of 10 home buyers start their search online, even before consulting an agent, Mr. Slutsky says. They're looking to research, read reviews and be dazzled by a cool, comprehensive online presence that includes an entertaining Twitter feed, thoughtful video and music and revelatory blog entries.

Industry observers like Mr. Slutsky and Mr. Roth name Art Condos, by Triangle West Developments, as a standout online presence among its peers. "Art Condos gets it," Mr. Slutsky says. "They realize that it's not just about selling units. Their approach is to promote local businesses and create buzz for the area — and that indirectly inspires consumers."

From Art Condo's website, the curious can click through to the blog, which is dedicated to West Queen West culture. Among the entries, readers will find a weekly feature on indie business owners in the neighbourhood, the most recent one a 20-questions style video shot on a pocket-sized Flip camera at Poppies, a small florist. But the big news is its recent contest, called ARTiculate. The campaign encourages would-be photographers and filmmakers to submit their own interpretation of West Queen West "as they see it now." The shots and mini movies (they must come in at under two minutes) can be uploaded to Art Condos' Facebook fan page, where they will be judged both by Facebook members

Developers can't maintain a Facebook or Twitter account without updates

and local art personalities. There are prizes, but best of all, winning entrants will be lauded as artists in their own right: Their photos and videos will be looped and displayed as part of Art Condo's rotating art exhibit in its lobby and amenity areas.

"Instead of trying to define the neighbourhood with our development, we want to throw it back at our market," says Gary Silverberg, Triangle president and an artist himself. "Who better to communicate the greatness of the area than the people who live and spend time here?" Triangle is a small company with a modest advertising budget, he says, so it's been forced to get creative. Fortunately, the medium of choice is cheap, casual and caters to its key audience. "The blog, this contest, they're all experiments for us," he says. "Everyone's walking around taking video and photos with their smart phones and posting it online anyway, so why not establish it as an art form?"

The challenge with so many social media tools, particularly the blogs and status updates, is to keep it real and relevant. "Developers can't maintain a Facebook or Twitter account without constant updates," Mr. Roth says. "The information doesn't just come daily anymore, it comes multiple times a day and you have to keep up."

Keeping up is a concern for Jim Ritchie, senior vice-president of sales and marketing at Tridel. "We're working on appointing someone to maintain our social media presence," he says. "We can't be involved in everything, but our largest audience is first-time condo buyers: They're in their mid to late 30s, they've embraced technology and we have to speak their language."

The developers who have found success in social media have done so by using it as an engagement, and not necessarily as an advertising tool, Mr. Roth says. "Authenticity lies in understanding the buyer," he says. "Social media works best with an organic, grassroots feel."

Condo's message truly does start at street level — not in a boardroom. "We have no choice but to be authentic with this," Mr. Silverberg says. "Hopefully we don't lose control of this type of media. It's kind of like a living organism; it's its own little beast."

National Post



Riz Dhanji of Canderel Stoneridge embraces buzzy marketing — a YouTube shows off his DNA3 condos.

BRETT GUNLOCK / NATIONAL POST

LIFE FLOWS, WHERE THE RIVER BENDS.

Where the River Bends,
There's a home for you
with a valley view over miles
of conservation land.

Where the River Bends,
You will hike a woodland path or run
with the river north to the headwaters,
and south all the way to the big lake.

Where the River Bends,
Trout and salmon flash in the
shadows and dare you
to try your luck.

Where the River Bends,
Wildflowers bloom,
and meadow birds will
serenade your day.

Where the River Bends,
There's a ridge-top seat
for you to watch the
weather roll in
and summer storms
light up the sky.

Where the River Bends,
Ferns and fawns, and other
wild things will dance in the dusk.

Where the River Bends,
There are schools,
and shops just minutes
away. The freeway and
Go Transit are nearby as well.

When you live on the ridge
Where the River Bends,
you'll hold in one hand
all you love about city life,
and nature's joy
in the other.

RiverBend will feature large
single family homes, medium
sized bungalows, and semis
attached at the garage only for
calm, quiet living.

Opening soon
in Ajax.



~RIVERBEND~

Reserve your place
Where the River Bends,
register now for
your priority preview
appointment.

marshallhomes.ca
1-888-983-0050

