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A slice of the Big Apple

Brownstone condos planned for Wolseley area

By: **Murray McNeill**

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FRESH PROJECTS DESIGN BUILDERS RENDERING [Enlarge Image](#)

High-end brownstone condominiums would replace five small bungalows on Woodrow Place.

It looks like something from the pages of a New York real estate magazine -- a row of historic-looking, brownstone townhouses stretching along a tree-lined street.

But the terrace-style, luxury condominiums that Fresh Projects Design Builders hopes to begin building later this year will be in Winnipeg, not New York City. And they'll be in a neighbourhood that hasn't seen a new condo development before -- the popular and picturesque Wolseley area.

The 12 units would be built on five residential lots on Woodrow Place, a little street that runs along the Assiniboine River west of Maryland Street.

The only thing standing in the way of the developers breaking ground is finding buyers for at least six of the spacious units, which are about 1,700 square feet and 1,800 square feet in size, and priced at \$595,000 and \$695,000 each.

Fresh co-owners Sean Fehr and Janice Froese said they need to pre-sell half of the units before they'll



Enlarge Image

Fresh co-owners Sean Fehr and Janice Froese want to bring luxurious brownstone condos to Winnipeg. (COLE BREILAND / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

proceed with the development. But they don't think that will be a problem.

"We're already getting some inquiries," Fehr said, even though they've just started marketing them.

He's optimistic they can reach their pre-sale target within about 60 days, which would pave the way for construction to begin later this year or early next year. He said it's expected to take about nine months to complete the development.

Fehr said five small bungalows will have to be demolished to make way for the townhouses, and they're all being rented out to tenants. So if the project is a go, they want to first make sure the tenants find somewhere else to live.

"That could take three months, or it could take the whole winter."

Woodrow Place is the first of what Fehr and Froese hope will be many upscale residential or residential/commercial infill developments for Fresh. It's a market niche they'd like to specialize in because they think there's a demand for more luxury condos in established neighbourhoods in Winnipeg.

Century 21 Bachman & Associates' Alison Maharaj, who is the lead listing agent for The Oz condo development in Osborne Village, agrees.

"I'm not going to say it's a huge demand," Maharaj said, noting that once the price gets above \$500,000, the number of prospective buyers begins to thin out.

She said most local condo buyers prefer to pay less than \$450,000. But she noted five of the 25 units in The Oz were priced higher than that, including one at \$560,000. And all five have already been sold.

With 35 per cent of the River Avenue condos now sold, the developer -- Westland Construction -- expects to begin construction within the next month or so, Maharaj said.

Fehr agreed the demand for luxury condos isn't as strong as the demand for more affordable units. That's one of the reasons why they opted for a low-density development, rather than a high-density one.

He said half of the Woodrow Place condos will be terrace-style units, with a garage on the ground and a two-storey, 1,717-square-foot condo with a rooftop deck above. And the other half will be two-storey, riverside units, about 1,800-square-foot in size, with a ground-level deck.

Although this is Fresh's first condo development, Fehr said the firm has been in business for about seven years. For the first five years, it operated as a numbered company specializing in hotel and restaurant redevelopment projects.

Two high-profile projects it's been involved in are the 2008 renovation of the 265-room Radisson Hotel at Portage Avenue and Smith Street, and the refurbishing of the interior of the former Metropolitan Theatre on Donald Street, which Canad Inns is converting into a dining/entertainment venue.

Fresh is also one of the firms that has submitted a proposal for a mixed-use residential/commercial

development that Manitoba Public Insurance wants to build on a surface parking lot it owns on Carlton Street.

Fresh's proposal calls for a boutique hotel, 480 enclosed parking stalls, ground-level retail space, and high-end residential and/or office condos.

Fehr said confidentiality agreements prevent him from disclosing further details about either the MPI or Metropolitan Theatre projects.

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