

Georgina brothers receive top marks

A pair of Georgina university students received top marks for their submission to York Region's Make Rental Happen Challenge.

Brothers Daniel and Kyle Foch, who attend the University of Guelph, were awarded first place in the competition by a panel of industry experts for their submission dubbed "Thinking Outside the Box", which envisions turning a plot of land on Ways Bay Drive and a strip of region-owned land that road and Metro Road South, just north of the Five Corners, into a mixed-use development, with retail space for artists and artisans on the street level and affordable housing above.

Both said they had long pondered potential uses for the land strip in question and really liked the idea of providing a space where artists and their families could afford to live because it allowed them to remain in the community and would make the area more vibrant.

"We like the idea of creative people being able to live and work close to home," Daniel said. "We also designed the project to be built out of shipping containers, so it's really sustainable."

The concept embraces the idea of adaptive re-use and the materials also make the project scalable, he added.

Kyle, a landscape architecture student, and Daniel, who studied commerce with a focus on real estate, combined their skills and submitted a comprehensive entry. The pair bested teams from across Canada and even Yale University in the United States.

They filed their submission May 9, Kyle's birthday, and learned of their win on Daniel's birthday, May 30.

— Sean Pearce



Daniel Foch (left) and his younger brother, Kyle, both of Guelph University stand in front of their award-winning "Outside the Box" rental unit design concept. Go to yorkregion.com to see more photographs from the event.

Innovative designers think outside the box

BY SEAN PEARCE
spearce@yrmg.com

Forget if you build it, they will come. They, being would-be tenants, are already here.

And, yet, despite possessing one of the fastest growing populations in Canada and experiencing an increasing demand for rental accommodations with it, the vacancy rate in York Region has remained stubbornly low, at around 1.6 per cent.

Last Friday, the region, in partnership with the Human Services Planning Board of York Region, held its Make Rental Happen Awards ceremony and Housing Symposium at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts to spur additional dialogue on the subject and, hopefully, give the number of rental housing options in York a much-needed boost.

According to Edward Heese, a

senior market analyst for the Greater Toronto Area with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, any area with less than a 2 per cent vacancy rate means you're looking at a tight market.

The conditions found in York have forced a number of young people to live at home longer and led many more young adults and senior citizens to move out of the region to areas where options are more plentiful and rents are more affordable, Heese said, adding many recent immigrants to Canada have opted to share what accommodations they can find with one or more other families.

"The trouble is, there hasn't been an awful lot of rental development in York Region," he said, adding apartments built specifically to be rented number just 5,000.

"The number of rental condominiums has exceeded the num-

GET CONNECTED

▶ HAVE YOUR SAY. For more on this story and to comment, go to yorkregion.com

ber of purpose-built rentals being built."

Manager of programs and research with the Institute on Municipal Finance & Governance at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs, André Côté, agrees there has been very little purpose-built rental accommodations built as the region's population has risen.

The number of condos has increased, the supply of freehold homes has climbed, but the inventory of rental units has stagnated, he said, which explains why some 150,000 households are languishing

on social housing wait lists across the province, including about 9,000 in York.

There's little relief to be had when it comes to home ownership either, Heese said.

The average price of a house in York Region, according to the Multiple Listing Service, is about \$650,000, he said, which would require an income of about \$130,000 to sustain, based on a 10 per cent down payment, with a 25-year mortgage at 3 per cent interest. The average price of a condo in York on the MLS is \$350,000, necessitating an income of about \$70,000 using the same criteria.

The situation is especially difficult for the relatively small number of people aged 25 to 34, Heese continued, with just 18 per cent of people in that age category able to afford some sort of home ownership anywhere in the GTA.

PEPPERTREE KLASSICS

Women's Fashions, Footwear and Accessories . . .

Celebrating
 Canada Day

Tuesday July 1st
 11am til 5 pm

Reg. Prices, all sales final Accessories 30% OFF

137 Main Street North, Markham 905.294.3882 • www.peppertree.ca • info@peppertree.ca Open 7 days a week and Holidays



One Day Only
60% OFF*
 all Fashions and Footwear

Starting July 2nd
 all Spring & Summer
 items will be
40% OFF*

