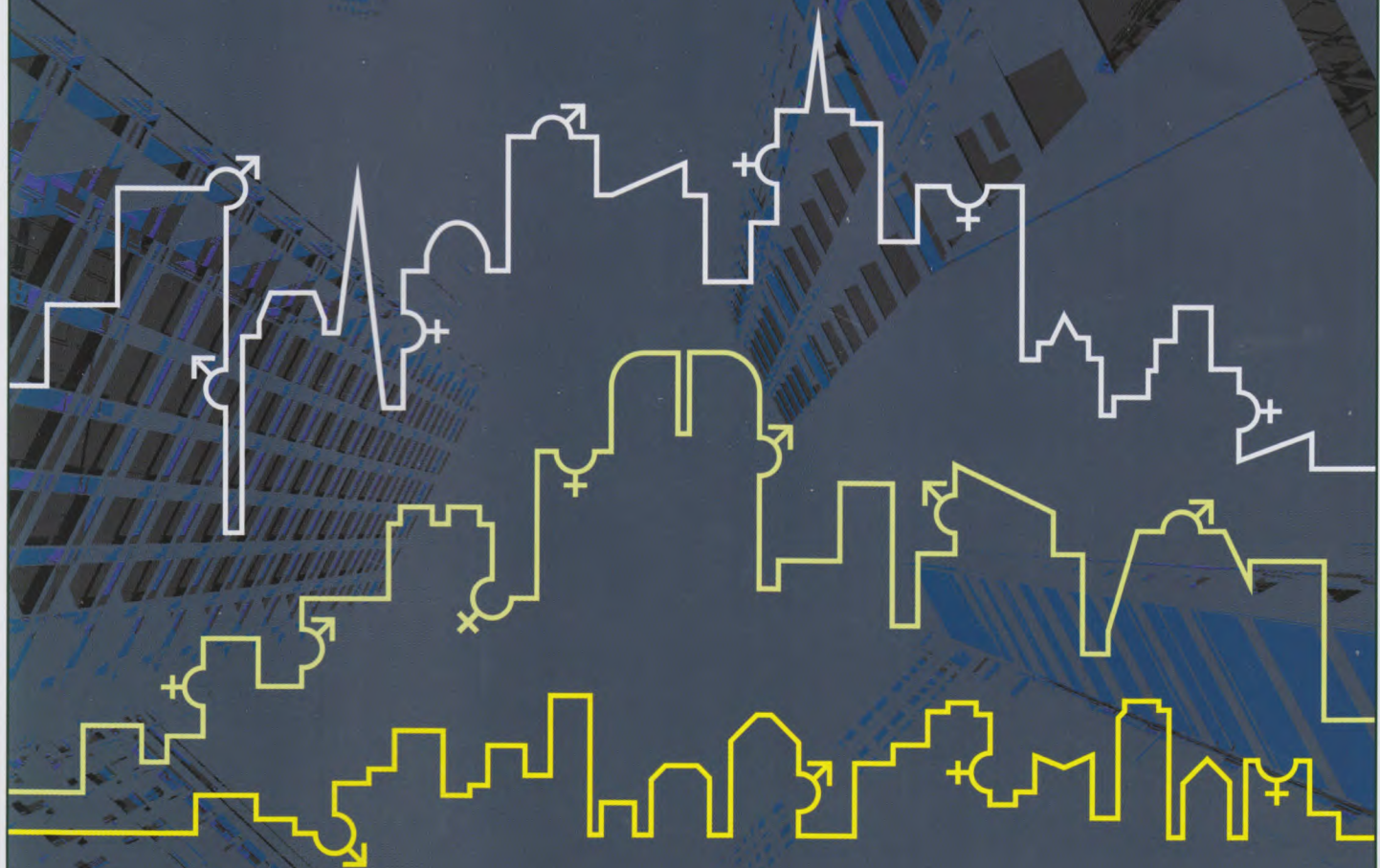


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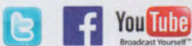
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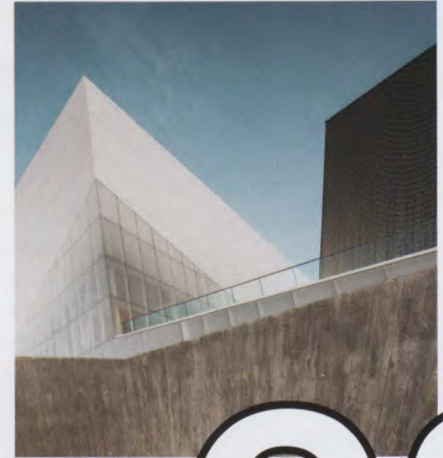
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ABOVE IMAGE:

The Complexe Sportif Saint-Laurent in Montréal by Saucier + Perrotte Architectes/HCMA creates a visual and physical link between two natural elements in the urban fabric. (Photograph by Olivier Blouin)



A BIT OF HOME, AWAY,

How a Canadian owner/developer brings a Canadian feel to a master-planned luxury resort project in Barbados.

By David Lasker

When you start with the best brand in the business, how do you take it from there? In describing the Crane Resort on the southeast coast of Barbados, one cites superlatives. Dating from 1887, the oldest hotel resort in the Caribbean boasts, among its five gourmet restaurants, Zen, whose “simply awesome” Japanese-Thai cuisine received Zagat’s top score in Barbados for food. The resort’s rooms and five cascading swimming pools overlook pink-sand Crane Beach, which *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* and the *Toronto Star* named one of the “10 Best Beaches in the World.”

ABOVE: The Crane Resort is the oldest hotel resort in the Caribbean. Paul Doyle got his design inspiration for The Private Residences from the resort’s original design, plus Canadian-esque touches.



The new Crane Private Residences is a gated residential community within the Crane Resort. This will be built over five phases and will feature two and three-bedroom residences and penthouses ranging from 1,916 to 3,619 square feet, spread over five acres and offering full use of the resort's amenities and services. The standard, one-bedroom unit is "the size of other resorts' two- or three-bedroom suites," said Paul Doyle, owner and managing director of Crane Resorts. Phase One's 16 residences are complete and Phase Two's further 20 residences are under construction.

A second development, Beach Houses at Skeete's Bay, St. Philip, overlooking Culpepper Island, will feature 63 free-standing residences with one to four bedrooms. The model home is complete; Phase One is under construction.

Further to attract buyers, the Crane can assist in renting an owner's residence during an owner's absence by providing marketing and reservation services for a fee of 15 per cent of net revenue of bookings generated by the Crane. "Canadians fit in really well in international destinations more than others, particularly Americans," Doyle said. "We are respectful of other people's culture. I felt a responsibility to Barbados to be true to the vernacular."

Design inspiration for the Private Residences derives from the original resort, including replicas of the old coral stone walls and furniture inspired by the original tall-poster mahogany beds, whose barley-twist columns rise from ornamental pineapple bases. Indeed, Doyle related, "A friend of my son's from university paid me the compliment of saying, 'It was smart to build a resort around the old village,' not realizing that we *are* the village. When the big hotel brands build in Barbados, typically, you can see the same thing in Pittsburgh."

ABOVE: The resort's name alludes not to the long-legged bird, but to the derrick that lifted barrels of rum and molasses to and from ships' holds. "The hotel started in the sailboat days when the area was called the Crane," says Doyle.

Many of the elements of the resort — while inspired by Barbados colonial history — are nonetheless innately Canadian. Crane Village evokes Main Street, Muskoka, with shops, restaurants and art galleries. While some traditional British resorts on the island, such as Colony Club, remain quite formal, the Crane has a friendly, characteristically Canadian sense of inclusiveness and lack of pretension.

"It's easy to sell luxury real estate to the snobs — 'You buy this and you're somebody' — but I'd rather spend my life not dealing with snobs," Doyle said. "Our public spaces and pools encourage people to meet. We do a cocktail party every week. Just as important as the architecture is the feeling of the community."

The Crane attracts a Boomer demographic with a predilection for serenity. "During the four-day brainstorming session, when we design a [new phase of the] resort, we design around the activities we see happening in the resort," Doyle said. "On this side of the island, we don't have the jet skis. It's quiet and relaxing. People coming here bring a suitcase of books, chill out and go for walks in the morning." But not, pre-



sumably, at noon, when, as the Noel Coward song puts it, only “Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.”

Residents can gracefully age in place here, thanks to the prevalence of wide doors and corridors, walk-in (or roll-in) showers and generous clearance around kitchen counters. “We will build units that can accommodate the guest who can never get out of a wheelchair. We have an elevator to the beach with a ramp down; everything is ramped in the resort.”

Born and bred in Toronto, where he studied fine arts at York University, Doyle moved to the Caribbean business capital in 1988 and was running a successful insurance business when he heard that the Crane was in receivership and for sale at a price he couldn't refuse. “It was a tiny little business, a good place to learn; you won't make huge mistakes with an 18-room hotel.” The learning curve, “gave me time to understand the market and appreciate how important the Crane was to the locals. It's a pretty small island and the Crane was the place to come to in the Roaring Twenties. We have a pavilion ballroom that was used for dances and fetes, built in 1921. So many people were married here, had their honeymoon here and other big events in their life. During the Big Band era, people from the islands would have come here for Old Year's Night festivities. That's what we call New Year's Eve here.”

The downside of an island paradise is the scarcity and cost of local goods and services. “When you are building in a place like Barbados, it can be very expensive, as a developer, to hire professionals and hire a contractor. We're able to sell to the

TOP AND ABOVE: The resort's five cascading swimming pools overlook pink-sand Crane Beach, which the *Toronto Star* named one of the “10 Best Beaches in the World.”

public for the same price other developers build: That's been our goal.”

The key to this success is vertical integration. “We do that to save costs, and we pass on the savings to our customers. We build by doing everything ourselves, including growing our own plants.” His in-house team includes five architects and drafts people, a CAD technician, three engineers and a construction crew, all dedicated exclusively to Crane properties.

Doyle also pondered the question: “If you're on an island, how do you train people in terms of international cuisine?” To encourage excellence and morale at the resort's esteemed restaurants, he invites the chef of Nove Trattoria, his favourite restaurant in Toronto (where Doyle reverse-snowbirds for the summer), down for an all-expenses-paid annual winter vacation in exchange for the chef helping to train the Crane's staff.

As for global warming, Doyle reports that the direst effect he's noticed occurred three years ago, when higher-than-normal temperatures pushed currents out of whack that normally contain North Atlantic's Sargasso Sea, causing brown Sargassum seaweed to pile up six feet high on the beach. While several Caribbean islands suffered hurricane devastation this past autumn, the ill winds rarely blow near the Crane. “We're lucky in Barbados not to be in a hurricane belt; the last to hit occurred in 1955. Most hurricane damage is caused by water swells, by the waves coming in. We're up 60 feet in the air on a cliff, which helps us. Traditional Barbados architecture is extremely solid, more so than in the U.S. or Canada. Everything is built to a hurricane standard, not with flimsy materials [like those] in Florida, being put together with a staple gun. Here, everything is concrete; even closet doors are solid wood. Everything shuts tight and solid. In the old days, they wouldn't know when a hurricane would come, so they had to build like it was coming tomorrow. We stay true to that.” **b**