

## Thinking outside the box at CityPlace

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Prism. It's just a word, and not even a big one, but that little word launched a lengthy, collaborative, creative process that will culminate in the 41-storey, 484-unit Quartz condominium.

"Prism" was the word developer Concord Adex's marketing staff brought to the initial meeting with the team at Figure3 ([www.figure3.com](http://www.figure3.com)), a Toronto-based interior design studio, to talk about the newest addition to its master-planned condo community at CityPlace, which now dominates the Toronto skyline just west of the CN Tower, overlooking Lake Ontario.

"With 'prism,' they wanted to evoke multiple facets and high contrast," says Christopher Wright, a founding partner at Figure3. Somewhere in the project's development, the word "prism" became the name Quartz, after a mineral in the earth's crust notable for its multi-faceted, crystalline surfaces and depth and variety of colours. The new name brought home the high-contrast theme for Figure3: "Interior, exterior; light, dark; soft, hard; matte, gloss. It was our job to interpret it," Wright says.

The building's lobby is, indeed, a study in contrast, with touches of rough, cool concrete and smooth, warm wood, the sparkle of a light fixture against the blackness of a night on Lake Ontario, visible through the ample windows. Even passing drivers on the nearby Gardiner Expressway can admire the dynamic colours of its carefully chosen glazing.

The design team's brainstorming also resulted in an innovative suite design, at the heart of which is a central column housing necessary plumbing and wiring for the kitchen and bath, which are then built back-



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RAWdesign, the Toronto architects responsible for BMW's stunning flagship store at the foot of the Don Valley Parkway, are the creative minds behind Quartz.

to-back around it. The units' living spaces in turn flow around that central hub; kitchen, bath and laundry facilities essentially form an island at the heart of the home.

This deceptively simple idea not only takes care of the unappealing realities of plumbing and electrical, but also adds as much as two feet to the width of the space by sharing "wet" walls.

"That central cube element was a driver for a lot of design details," says Suzanne Bettencourt, senior team leader at Figure3. Sliding doors on the bedroom allow near-instant reconfiguring of the space, as well as clever camouflaging of the bulkheads that would traditionally run along the ceiling, a feng shui no-no that didn't mesh with the developer's Eastern design philosophies.

"It's not about a nice-looking space — it's about emotions, feeling good. What do you hear? See? Touch? How do you feel? What are you experiencing?"

"We really think deeply about it at every level of design," Wright adds. "It's about personal identity. We take into account how space influences emotions."

Like a prism radiating rays of colours, the whiteness of the residential tower anchors the colourful surrounding landscape and the podium that houses the common amenities. The private, insular nature of the suites is contrasted by the inherently social atmosphere of urban, community living in the condo's common areas. As timeless and neutral as the suites had to be, designers wanted the shared areas to complement the dynamic public lives of the residents.

Along with the suite interiors and lobby, Figure3 designed the 22,000-square-foot space that includes guest suites, games room, meeting room, lounge and a swimming pool housed in a long, low building that forms the podium from which the intricate tower rises, linking it to a planned second tower to the west.

Another of the property's distinctions is Canoe Landing Park, an 8-acre (3.2-hectare) park designed by, among others, renowned author and artist Douglas Coupland. The green space features a mile-long (1.6-kilometres) perimeter track, homage to Terry Fox, as well as whimsical touches such as giant sculptural fishing lures.

All together — tower, podium, landscaping, interior, exterior, public and private living — it all forms a cohesive, vibrant whole that could only come from a dedicated team.

The collaborative process extends to the project's mechanical and structural engineers, and RAWdesign, the Toronto architects responsible for BMW's stunning flagship store at the foot of the Don Valley Parkway, as well as Panorama, another one of the neighbourhood's Concord condo properties ([www.rawdesign.ca](http://www.rawdesign.ca)).

"It's a complex, three-dimensional puzzle," says creative partner Wright.

"I don't think we have a 'look,'" Bettencourt says. "I mean, I don't think you can walk into a place and say to yourself, 'This is a Figure3 space.'"

Wright finishes the thought: "We'd rather be known for the process."

Excavation at the Quartz site near Bathurst St. and Fort York Blvd. begins this summer. Suites range from 443 square feet to more than 1,000 and are priced from \$250,000 to \$650,000.

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The sales centre is located at 23 Spadina Ave. To find out more, visit [www.cityplace.ca/quartz](http://www.cityplace.ca/quartz) or call 416-813-0999.