



The Salt Room at The Saint Condos by Minto.

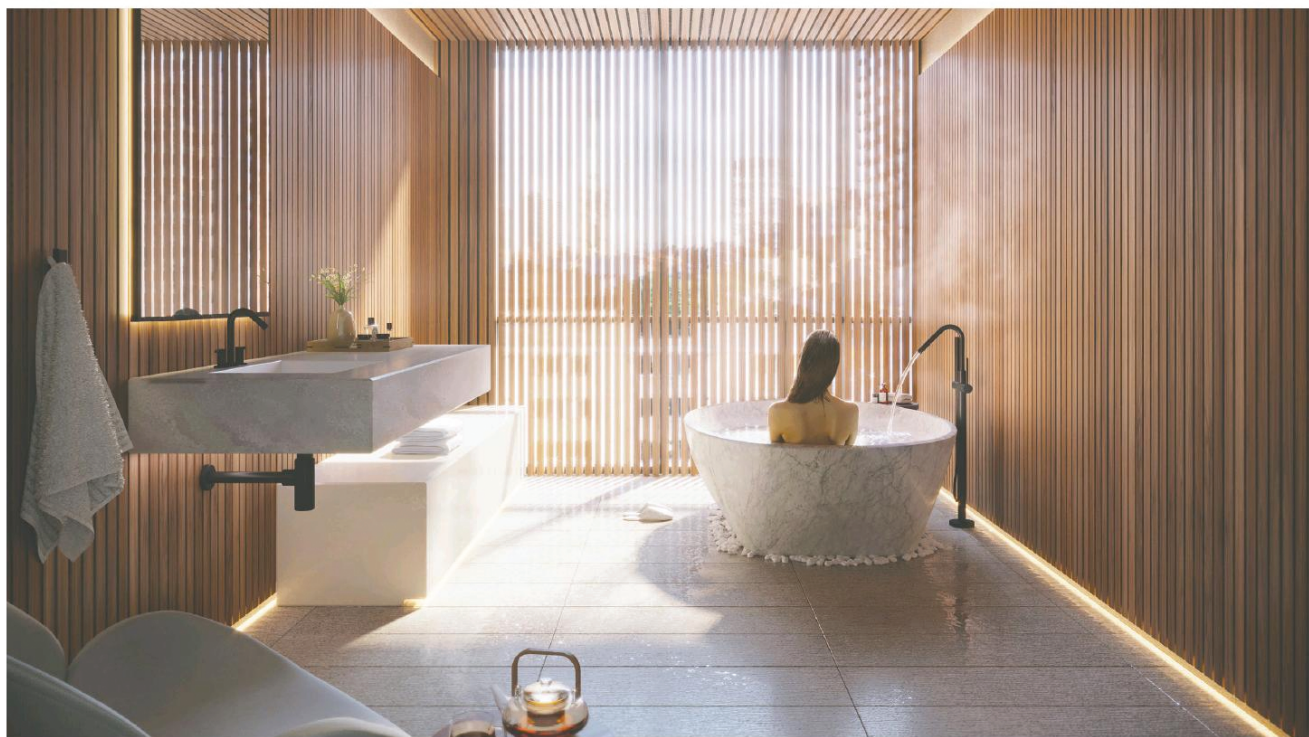
# WELCOME OM

Spa amenities are coming to a number of condo developments in the GTA *PH2*





“ONCE UPON A TIME, OUR CONTACT WITH WELLNESS WAS OCCASIONAL. WE WENT TO THE GYM OR GOT A MASSAGE. BUT THIS IS CHANGING FAST. WELLNESS, FOR MORE PEOPLE, IS EVOLVING FROM RARELY TO DAILY ... FROM A LUXURY TO A ... LIFESTYLE VALUE. — KATHERINE JOHNSTON



PHOTOS: MINTO

The Saint's Spa room: spa amenities at Toronto condos reflect the booming global wellness market.

IRIS BENAROLA

## WELLNESS AT HOME

THE LATEST IN CONDO OFFERINGS  
MAKE SPA APPOINTMENTS SUPERFLUOUS

After a long day at the office, residents of the 60-storey condo coming to 11 Yorkville won't have to hit the spa down the street to unwind. Instead, they can stay in and sweat out their stresses in their hammam at home, where men's and women's Turkish baths, open around the clock, are an elevator ride away.

At The Saint by Minto, over on Church Street, an area rich with stressed-out Ryerson students and millennials, residents can meditate in a glowing salt room, believed to reduce inflammation.

Spa amenities like these are coming to a number of new condo developments across the GTA. They are yet another byproduct of a global wellness industry that grew 12.8 per cent from 2015 to 2017, to a \$4.2-trillion market from a \$3.7-trillion market, according to the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), a non-profit organization that gathers data for the sector.

"Once upon a time, our contact with wellness was occasional," explains Katherine Johnston, senior research fellow at GWI. "We went to the gym or got a massage. But this is changing fast. Wellness, for more people, is evolving from rarely to daily ... from a luxury to a dominant lifestyle value. And that pro-

found shift is driving powerful growth."

Interior designer Elaine Ceconi of Ceconi Simone, the design firm behind 11 Yorkville, has watched the runoff from that cultural shift flow into condo design, not only in Toronto but also in projects she's worked on in Washington, D.C., Florida and California.

"We're seeing a wellness aspect in all of our projects," Ceconi says. "There's a greater awareness in general in the mass market in terms of people being cognizant of what they're eating and drinking, the exposure to technology," she says — in short, social media's clarion call to live your best life, find live-work balance and stop to smell the roses before it's too late.

Spas in condos play into that trend, meeting the demand for wellness amenities that have the added benefit of convenience, she says.

For the spa package at 11 Yorkville by Capital Development and Metropia, slated for 2022, Ceconi created an "experience shower" and a "shower tower" in both the men's and women's change rooms.

"Imagine a separate enclosed room clad in stone on the floors and walls and a bench where you lie down," she says, describing the water jets from above that gently pummel you. You adjust the pressure, set the timer, and chill. "These are elements we've never done before," Ceconi says.

The freestanding "shower tower," meanwhile, has water jets emerging from all directions. "You're immersed in water, so it's partly a massage, partly a soothing feeling," Ceconi says.

The hammam there has a "U-shaped bench, steam that rises from below and a wash of soothing lights coming off the wall." It's self-serve, says Ceconi: "You can go there at 3 a.m. From a resident's perspective, it gives you freedom and flexibility."

But the real jewel may be the infinity-edge pool on the fourth floor, "which is very much a part of the spa experience because you access the spa from the pool deck," Ceconi explains. A rarity in Yorkville, the heated all-season pool is designed so swimmers can scoot underneath a glass partition to the outdoors in summer or winter.

There's a pad to perch on, a hot tub and a fireplace.

According to Kelly Cray of U31, the interior designer for the River & Fifth by Broccolini Developments at Dundas and River streets, a young, progressive demographic is driving the evolution of condo amenities, particularly in the spa-services arena.

"Wellness is trending and so is the whole fitness component," Cray says. "It's not one thing — it's about a holistic lifestyle. At River, we're providing professional-type gyms, a pool and a co-ed steam room."

"Toronto is such a competitive market," he adds. "Each developer tries to raise the bar with each project Wellness amenities are getting quite a bit more sophisticated than they were five years ago for something just used by residents."

Relaxation at the 37-storey River & Fifth happens on the 12th floor, where a rooftop resort-style pool overlooks the city on one side and the lush green Don Valley on the other. A shallow area has lounge chairs submerged in the water. "The idea is to take a dip, have a shower, sit in the steam," Cray says.

"The steam room is enclosed in glass and will have a hammam-style feel," Cray adds, noting its Instagrammable appeal. "There is a steam lounge with natural light for one to relax in after a steam session. We also integrated a cool-down shower in this area to elevate the experience."

Over at The Saint by Minto, a 47-storey Church Street condo opening in 2023, the health-and-wellness amenity program is extensive. The plan is to spread the spa over two floors that open onto a Zen garden. Matthew Brown, director of product development, says the services have been carefully curated.

"We have a big mandate to create amenity spaces that get used — they can't be too precious," Brown says, adding the logistics of putting in a staffed spa don't work. Additionally, the demographic is diverse at this condo. "We're close to St. George, Ryerson and the St. Lawrence Market," he says, which attract millennials, who care about wellness, Brown says.

Spa amenities have to keep up. "While there's no one making cucumber

water," Brown says, you can book a treatment room for your own acupuncturist or massage therapist to pop by. Or you can shvitz in the infrared sauna. Or head to the salt room for a meditation session.

Other amenities at The Saint include private spa rooms with soaking tubs; a rain room with a ceiling-mounted rain head with a chromotherapy feature, believed to be an aid for seasonal affective disorder; and a dark meditation room with soothing lights that mimic stars on the ceiling.

Viviana Quesada, spa director at the Four Seasons, isn't surprised that developers are capitalizing on growth in the wellness category. A condo-hotel in Yorkville, the Four Seasons has operated a spa since 2012 that sees steady business from both the public and the building's residents.

There are innovative offerings on the menu, like the cryotherapy facial. It was developed by a plastic surgeon in London and uses a machine that blows air to bring the skin to sub-zero temperatures, Quesada says. "It stimulates cells ... The skin feels so alive afterwards."

This, of course, is a full-service spa and offers a range of professional treatments that regular condos don't provide — not even wellness-focused ones with steam baths or salt rooms.

At least not yet.

For National Post