

Hume: Leslieville gets some welcome good news

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Star Columnist

Much put upon Leslieville has been much in the news recently. Though it is as neighbourly a neighbourhood as exists in Toronto, it suffers from out-of-date attitudes that see it as an old industrial precinct and a convenient place to put things no one else wants. Most recently, that took the form of a Walmart.

In truth, Leslieville has come a long way in recent years. Organized around newly invigorated Queen St. E, now among the most compelling streets in the city, it is an area that boasts some wonderful 19th-century building stock as well as many Edwardian jewels. Indeed, there are several former banks in the vicinity that come close to magnificence. Where did the optimism go?

The neighbourhood has the feel of an urban village, self-contained but fully connected to the larger community by the grid and the public transit it supports. No question, this is a district that has seen its share of hard times. The old road houses that dot Queen have been in decline for decades; but even that has started to change.

The potential is enormous; as much as anything, the growing desirability of Leslieville comes from the rightness of scale. In this part of town, blocks are short, streets narrow and uses mixed. And in its current phase — halfway along the road to gentrification — it still has the gritty vitality of genuine city enclave. As Queen West finds itself increasingly corporatized and condoized, the appeal of Queen East will grow ever more apparent.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

The Printing Factory Lofts, despite its humble origins, is stunning, says Christopher Hume.

Condo Critic

Printing Factory Lofts, 201 Carlaw Ave.: This impressive development incorporate an early 20th-century industrial building on which a steel-and-glass extension now sits along with a couple of courtyards and a series of townhouses.

The old red brick structure, which stands only three storeys tall, occupies a large lot that faces west onto Carlaw. The site, which reaches east to Boston Ave., is unexpectedly deep. The result is a project that pays homage to its industrial heritage and which speaks a thoroughly contemporary architectural language.

Though that puts it at odds with nearby housing, in this case, old and new complement each other quite happily. Surfaces have been left mostly unfinished and the (new) balconies are handsome but unadorned. The result is a project that fits in and feels right. Despite its humble origins, the facade comes complete with carved limestone and Corinthian columns.

In other words, it's stunning.

GRADE: A

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