






A contemporary Picnic lands in High Park

new upstart North Drive focuses on mature Toronto

-  **Location**
Bloor West
-  **Builder**
North Drive
-  **Development**
PICNIC
-  **Home Type**
Condominium
-  **Sales Centre**
2126 Bloor Street West
-  **Contact**
picnichighpark.com

NORTH DRIVE IS laying claim to Bloor West with PICNIC, its third development in the neighbourhood in two years. In a city where launching a new neighbourhood has become sport, this savvy, young start-up is instead targeting iconic, supply-constrained 'hoods, steadfastly taking on the heavy lifting of slowly modernizing classic pieces of Toronto.

North Drive's premise is straight-forward: create high-quality real estate directly for end users; control the sales experience; select locations close to transit; and focus on improving the local urban fabric.

"We know Bloor West, having spent our whole lives here, and we believe that if we

build thoughtful, impeccably-crafted buildings that cater to end-users, the market will respond," says Jordan Morassutti, one of North Drives' three partners. Jordan's brother Taylor Morassutti and long-time friend Robert Fidani round out the group. It's been a successful start for a company that officially launched in 2011, but has more than three lifetimes of experience to draw from.

Naming the company was easy. Not only did all three partners grow up on North Drive in the west end, but they also grew up in the real-



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estate industry with ingrained backgrounds in finance and development before joining together officially.

Now having zeroed in on new-build residential, North Drive shows no interest in following industry trends. It's not the first time this upstart trio has operated outside the box. In 2013, the young partners gave themselves a unique challenge with their first development, The High Park, which was to sell all 103 units in the 11-storey building themselves. It was a bid to control the sales experience out the gate, a practice that has only been slightly modified for PICNIC, with the introduction of an internally-trained sales team.

"We've been very careful to select the right sites and work with the best architects and designers, as well as local residents, to ensure our buildings become integral to the urban story," says Robert Fidani. "It's our mantra to be contextually responsive because we know that in the neighbourhoods that we're targeting, this is what residents want."

Some may think it's daunting to launch four projects in their first few years, but construction on The High Park has

already begun and after receiving unanimous approvals from the city, North Drive's third development, 4 The Kingsway, is slated to begin construction later this year. A joint partnership with Minto on Yorkville Park is also currently under construction and PICNIC is looking to have shovels in the ground next spring.

"We have a very clear vision of who the North Drive customer is and have tailored PICNIC specifically for them," says Morassutti. "It's a demographic that is interested in single-level living; wants to be near the subway, who is used to luxurious finishes; who wants to be in the city's classic neighbourhoods, and who is attracted to a more convenient lifestyle."

With a vivid understanding of the Bloor West purchaser, North Drive continues to enlist high-end designers that fit perfectly with their projects. Toronto firm Quadrangle is handling both interiors and architecture for PICNIC after splitting duties with Ceconi Simone on The High Park, while Richard Wengle and Brian Gluckstein are tapped for North Drive's 4 The Kingsway development.

"North Drive really has an idea that Bloor West and other classic neighbourhoods around the city are untapped markets. And I think they're right. We wanted to help realize their vision, delivering a building for PICNIC that is sensitively inserted into the streetscape, that elevates its surroundings and that continues to set a precedent on the strip," says Richard Witt, principal at Quadrangle.

Rising eight-storeys, PICNIC consists of 68 tailored units with custom-inspired finishes, including walk-in closets modelled after high-end retail showrooms, drawing on Quadrangle senior associate George Foussias' award-winning work in retail and hospitality. Five-piece en suites and outdoor balcony space are standard in every unit, while kitchens offer bold, clean aesthetics including millwork, integrated fridges and a balanced mix of closed and open upper cabinetry. A rooftop terrace offers breathtaking views of High Park as the overall building-design reflects the international tastes of its globe-trotting, neighbourhood residents.

"This is a different level of product for Bloor West," says Foussias. "PICNIC is a statement. Your closet is a showroom, your finishes are impeccable, your lobby is speckled in brass, and High Park is your amenity space. There are no compromises necessary."

Picnic is located at 2114 Bloor West, with prices from the \$400s to \$1,000,000. The building rises eight stories and consists of 68 units, ranging from 668 s.f. to 1,250 s.f. Opening October 2015, the sales centre will be located at 2126 Bloor Street West. To register please visit www.picnichighpark.com.