

Sam Mizrahi is a micromanager ... and proud of it

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By: [Ryan Starr](#) Staff Reporter., Published on Thu Feb 21 2013

Sam Mizrahi freely admits he's a mega micromanager.

So it suits the president of [Mizrahi Developments](#) just fine that his head office is located right next door to the construction site for 133 Hazelton, a Parisian-style nine-storey luxury condo his company is building at Davenport Rd. and Hazelton Ave.

"We're literally right on top of our project," the firm's 41-year-old president notes as he leads a visitor out onto the second-floor terrace of his office to inspect the goings-on in the construction pit below. "We're micromanaging it from next door."

Mizrahi Developments is the general contractor on all its projects, part of the company's full-service approach that can be traced to its custom homebuilder beginnings. "We don't sub (contract) out our construction, we do it ourselves," Mizrahi says. "Everything else is done in-house, too, whether it's marketing, communications or customer service."

And as with the custom homes he builds, Mizrahi allows condo buyers to customize every aspect of their suites — from the layout to the furniture — to suit their particular tastes and preferences.

The past year was a good one for Mizrahi. At 133 Hazelton, 37 units — priced from \$1.8 million to \$3.2 million — sold out in nine months, save for three suites. The building is scheduled for occupancy by the end of 2014.

Two doors down the road is the sales centre for Mizrahi's other current condo endeavour, 181 Davenport, a 12-storey project that generated just as much interest when it launched last fall. Half of

the 110 units — which range from 700 square feet to 1,600 square feet, and prices starting at \$400,000 — sold within 60 days.

Even in the first week of January, normally real estate's hibernation season, Mizrahi sold five condos worth a total of \$10 million, most of them at 181 Davenport.

The way he sees it, the success of the projects speaks to the strength of Toronto's luxury market; it also underscores the pent-up demand in Yorkville for the sort of residential product Mizrahi is offering: elegant, traditional-looking block buildings like one might find in Paris, London or New York.

"There are not really any midrise boutique residences here," he says during a tour of the 181 Davenport sales centre. "We've got all these new buildings going up in the area but nobody's really doing timeless, old-world architecture."

His buildings will fill that architectural void, he says. "And I think that has a significant impact on why we're achieving the sales we are."

DETAIL IS PERSONAL

Attention to detail is something Mizrahi takes "very personally," and very seriously.

"It comes from building high-end custom homes," he explains. "Luxury homes demand a high level of detail because you're catering to a detail-oriented clientele. They want to have exceptional value, craftsmanship and quality. And that's something that resonates with me."

Frustration over shoddy, sloppy construction was his main motivation for getting into the custom-home business. "I saw details were being missed and that there was a real need for old-world craftsmanship to come back to the custom-home market," says Mizrahi, who worked in land development before he began building homes.

He launched his home-building business in 2007 and experienced early success, going from building five custom homes a year to doing 12 a year by 2010.

The company's first foray into multi-family development was Lytton Park Townhomes, a collection of six high-end homes at the entranceway to the park.

Eventually, clients began asking Mizrahi when he planned to start building condos. "They told me that they would move into a condo if the condo had the types of finishes and details we were doing in the custom homes," he recalls.

And then a light went off. "We realized there was an opportunity to take customization and our attention to detail and apply it to neighbourhoods at a midrise level."

MODERN BUT TIMELESS

Mizrahi's initial efforts, 133 Hazelton and 181 Davenport, promise to give that dreary stretch of Davenport a much-needed facelift. "We want to bring the residential feel back to the neighbourhood," he says.

Given that the condos will mark Yorkville's northern gateway, Mizrahi wanted to build structures that would be worthy of their prestigious setting. "Hazelton is one of the most prominent streets in Toronto," he says. "It is Yorkville and this is the entrance into it.

"So I looked at it as a moral responsibility to build buildings that are going to stand the test of time and resonate with people."

Suites at 133 Hazelton and 181 Davenport can be custom designed to suit their buyers' preferences. Purchasers can dictate where they want their bedroom and living rooms to be located in the unit, and how big they should be; they can indicate if and where they want a wine cellar or walk-in closet to go; and they can select what furniture they'd like and how their art should be hung. They may even have the option of knocking out a wall to open up their space.

"I'm used to custom homebuilding and custom-home design, so I don't mind sitting down and redoing plans five or six times," Mizrahi maintains. "I love doing it because then the homeowner has a role in the design."

And besides, he's the last guy who's going to take issue with a little micromanagement on the part of his clients. "It makes them truly own their unit, because they designed it," he says. "So it's not cookie cutter. Every one of these is a unique, individual residence."

QUALITY CONTROL

You'd think allowing condo purchasers to customize their suites would create massive logistical headaches for a developer and suck up valuable time and resources.

But Mizrahi claims he's able to control it all thanks in large part to a process known as ISO 9000.

ISO streamlines the custom construction process by codifying all potential design changes, and creating a road map that a builder can follow to carry out the job efficiently and cost-effectively. "So when (clients) want to change colours, walls, countertops, kitchens, or floors, we already have a process in place," says Mizrahi.

"(ISO) allows micromanagement of the construction process," he adds, noting that his firm is the only builder in Canada with ISO certification.

"It allows us to meet timelines and meet budgets. And for the homeowner it's important because there's a third party (Lloyds Assurance) auditing the process and ensuring we're meeting or exceeding those standards."