

# Scoop digs into West St. Clair West

Midrise condo project is the first along this unique stretch of a busy west-end Toronto street.



By **RYAN STARR** Staff Reporter  
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Adidharma Purnomo was on a mission.

His company, [Graywood Developments](#), had been looking at purchasing a property on St. Clair Avenue W., just east of Old Weston Rd., to build a condo project.

Before Graywood acquired the site, Purnomo, 43, its development director, wanted to see what life was like along this quirky but uncelebrated stretch in the city's west end. "So I spent a few days walking around the neighbourhood, visiting all the shops and restaurants," he tells the Star.

One Saturday night he hung out at a sports bar and sipped coffee as he watched patrons play cards. "It was good coffee, a nice espresso." He popped in to the Tavora market, where fresh fish is imported from Portugal twice a week. And he sampled the goods at Alli's Fresh Baked, a bakery that supplies farmers' markets across the city.

Purnomo even attended a service at the local church — the Faith Impact Ministry whose location on St. Clair W. features a large "Jesus Saves" sign — and was welcomed warmly. "The pastor introduced me to the congregation," he says. "And there was lots of singing and colourful characters."

Purnomo was heartened by the diverse, dynamic community he encountered on his tour, but not surprised. A decade earlier, Graywood had built townhomes at St. Clair Ave. W. and Keele St., so he was aware of what the neighbourhood had to offer.

"It's like a microcosm of Toronto," he says, pointing to an ethnic mix that includes Portuguese, Italian, Philipino, Jamaican and Eastern European residents. "That's what's makes it so wonderful."

While Purnomo developed a quick affinity for the people, he recognized the neighbourhood was in need of new housing options. "A lot of what's there is outdated," he explains. "We didn't think it reflected the richness of this community and what it could be."

Graywood hopes to rectify the situation with [Scoop Condos](#), a six-storey building it launched earlier this summer at 1771 St Clair Ave. W.

The 72-unit condo is the first phase of a midrise community that'll eventually occupy several blocks in an area Graywood has branded "West St Clair West."

The condos, the first for this neighbourhood, will have retail at ground-level and a streetcar line running by their front door. Purnomo notes the development — named Scoop as a nod to those who come to discover the gem of a neighbourhood — will help to better connect The Stockyards shopping node to the west with Corso Italia and Wychwood Barns to the east.

And he says Scoop is precisely the kind of project the city wants to see in places like these. “It’s a model for how avenues along transit lines can be developed. We want it to establish a standard for future development here.”

Amenities at Scoop include a gym, communal dining area, library, and dog wash station — an essential, given the building’s proximity to several parks in the neighbourhood to its south.

The six-storey midrise will step down to three storeys at the back of the property, creating a harmonious transition to the scale of the adjacent homes. And the condo will be set back along St. Clair, providing more light and breathing room around the building while preserving the pedestrian feel of the street.

The retail space at Scoop and the phases that follow will bring “new excitement” to the area, says Purnomo, noting that Scoop’s ground-floor space will be ideally suited for a coffee house, eatery, bookstore, or bike shop. Future phases will have a more substantial commercial component, space large enough to accommodate a drugstore or grocery store. “The retail along St Clair needs rejuvenation, shops and services that better meet the needs of the community,” Purnomo says.

Speaking of the community, Graywood’s plan for Scoop received strong support from the local population. Shopkeepers and residents — briefed on the project via multiple community consultations before the developer went to the city to seek approvals — say they’re looking forward to the transformation the development will bring.

“The people here have a vision for the area,” Purnomo says. “They want to see it prosper and progress.”

No one was a bigger champion for Scoop than Don Panos, the owner of Don’s Wholesale Meats and head of the local business improvement area, who passed away July 12.

Purnomo says Panos, a long-standing and beloved local business owner, was instrumental in introducing Graywood and its proposal to the St. Clair Gardens BIA and the broader community, and subsequently in helping the developer to secure municipal approvals. “I can’t stress how important he was to the success of this project,” he says. “We as a company are hugely indebted to him.”

“Don attended all the meetings at city hall; they knew him well there,” says Rose Signorile, owner and operator of Central Paint and Tiles, a local shop. “He was a neighbourhood institution,” adds her son, Rocky. “The guy did everything. I still can’t believe he’s gone.”

Don died the week Scoop launched, Rocky points out, a sad twist of fate, given his passion for the project and the changes it promised to bring to the neighbourhood he loved.

But Purnomo says his company will honour Panos’ memory by delivering on that promise — and then some. “We want Scoop to set the tone for what’s to come in this community in the future.”

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## Meet the denizens of West St. Clair West

A charming collection of shops, services and galleries line the stretch of St. Clair Ave. W. where Scoop Condos will be built.

The folks behind the counters of these establishments are all committed to building a brighter future for the area. Here are five West St. Clair West personalities, and their stories.

### 1. Alli Millar, owner, Alli’s Fresh Baked

She opened her [shop](#) eight years ago, in the midst of the construction of a dedicated right-of-way for the St. Clair streetcar. “There was a lot of noise and dust,” Millar recalls. But Millar persevered and today her shop is a success, supplying bread and baked goods to farmers’ markets across the city, including Evergreen Brickworks and Wychwood Barns. West St Clair West now has more young families moving in, she says, “And they’re interested in what I’m doing here, because I do healthier things, with organic and gluten-free options.” Millar is optimistic about the new condo soon to be built across from her shop. “It’s going to grow this community, and that should help businesses here to get going a bit more.”

### 2. Peter Alexander Por, artist/resident

Just down the road from the Scoop site, Por marks his 10th year living and working in a studio he on the St. Clair W. strip. The retired architect, whose funky sculptures and paintings are on display, was drawn to the neighbourhood he regarded as “under-valued but which showed the potential for moving ahead. And my hunch was right.” Por loves the community’s tight-knit nature and its cultural diversity, which was on full display during the recent Euro Cup tournament. “It was pandemonium here after Portugal won,” he says. “I didn’t sleep very much that night.” Por’s thoughts on Scoop Condos? “I think it’ll help the neighbourhood to move up in quality.” His only beef? “I was actually hoping for a taller building.”

### 3. Rocky and Rose Signorile, owners, Central Paint and Tiles, St. Clair Gardens BIA members

Rose Signorile operates one of the area’s longest-running [businesses](#). “We’ve been here 44 years,” she says. Her father bought the building, and before renting it out, asked if any of his kids wanted to do something with it. “I told him, ‘I’ll do something,’ ” Rose says. “I saw a lot of older houses in the area and figured old houses need repairs.” Her son Rocky has worked alongside her for the past 30 years and they’ve both watched area businesses struggle during the streetcar track construction. “People still don’t come here because of the tracks.” But the arrival of Scoop Condos signals that revitalization is coming, notes Rocky. “And hopefully it’ll be the first of many developments like these in the area.”

### 4. Kendra Wilson, owner, Simply Dogs Salon & Boutique

Her [dog-grooming](#) business serves a vital community role: keeping the local canine population looking sharp, and happy — there are no dog crates at her shop. “So the dogs get to be comfortable and hang out, which is nicer for them, less stressful,” says Wilson, an 11-year veteran of the pooch-preening biz who took over the shop a year and a half ago. The West St. Clair West community has a small-town feel that reminds her of her hometown: Morpeth, in the Chatham-Kent area. “Everybody knows everybody there, and I get that feeling here, which is nice in a big city like Toronto.” As for Scoop, she’s looking forward to the new residents it will bring. “It means more customers supporting the local economy.”

### 5. Lillian Nasakob-Abalos, branch manager, St. Clair/Silverthorn library

Lillian Nasakob-Abalos has run the [local library](#) for eight years. The St. Clair/Silverthorn branch, which opened in 1981, is a community hub and it’s also about to embark on a redevelopment. “It’s perfect timing,” she says, noting the revamp will go hand-in-hand with other changes in the neighbourhood, namely the arrival of Scoop. “This has been thought of as a tougher neighbourhood, traditionally,” Nasakob-Abalos notes. But things are evolving; young families are now moving in. “You get lots of kids coming to the library who will hopefully be lifelong users.” She’s looking for Scoop to add vibrancy to the community, and spur more projects in the area. “It’s been a bit neglected through the years,” she says. “So its time has certainly come.”