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Is this the most important man in real estate today?

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Steve Diamond, CEO of Diamond Corp.

Steve Diamond may be Toronto's most important city builder. The former lawyer is president and CEO of [Diamond Corp](http://www.diamondcorp.ca/) (<http://www.diamondcorp.ca/>), the real estate development company responsible for some of the city's most thoughtful and forward-thinking developments.

Take for example, [Garrison Point](http://garrisonpoint.ca/) (<http://garrisonpoint.ca/>) (in partnership with [Cityzen](http://cityzen.typepad.com/) (<http://cityzen.typepad.com/>) and [Fernbrook Homes](http://www.fernbrookhomes.com/) (<http://www.fernbrookhomes.com/>)), where an unlikely wedge-shaped 7.6-acre site between two railway lines just north of historic Fort York was reimaged as a family-friendly neighbourhood with five condo towers, park, pool and pedestrian bridge.

Then there's The Well, in partnership with [RioCan REIT](http://riocan.com/) (<http://riocan.com/>)/[Allied Properties REIT](http://alliedreit.com/) (<http://alliedreit.com/>), a large-scale, mixed-use community currently in the pre-construction phase that will be a game changer at Front St. and Spadina Ave.

Diamond was a partner at firm McCarthy Tétrault, where he helmed the municipal law and planning group before starting his own development company.

"I wanted the opportunity to create my own vision of projects and to be able to follow my own instructions in terms of dealing with cities," he says. "While some developers were certainly carrying through with city-building projects, I wanted to see if it was possible to create great architecture and to create sustainable buildings and go through the process by building consensus with city planners, councillors, ratepayers and residents."

He believed if developers foster those relationships, there could be less contention surrounding new development and no need for Ontario Municipal Board involvement. His hunch was correct and he takes pride in Diamond Corp.'s successful record for achieving consensus.

When Diamond and his team first sit down with architects, they want thoughts and ideas, not a detailed design. Then they meet with community representatives and share their ideas and concepts.

"There will be differences of opinion, but it's important to understand the community you're working in," Diamond says.

His team takes community feedback seriously. "For [The Well](http://www.thewelltoronto.com/) (<http://www.thewelltoronto.com/>), we proposed a certain design for the office building that turned its back to Front and Wellington. People didn't feel it represented the look of the King and Spadina neighbourhood and we reoriented it and made a change in architecture."

The Well, with 7.7 acres, is one of the largest downtown sites under development and each building on the site will contain at least two uses and in some cases, three.

"It will have big, main-street retail and people can walk through it," Diamond says. "It's an open place for cultural events and lines up with pedestrian walkways. We think it's quite innovative."

Diamond Corp. also will play a key role in the evolution of the Don Mills and Eglinton neighbourhood, where it will create a new landmark mixed-use community on the 60-acre Celestica landsite with [Lifetime Developments](http://lifetimedevolutions.com/) (<http://lifetimedevolutions.com/>) and [Context Development](http://www.context.ca/) (<http://www.context.ca/>). Electronics firm [Celestica International Inc.](https://www.celestica.com/home) (<https://www.celestica.com/home>) will remain on the site, as new high-



The Well at Front St. and Spadina, rendering courtesy of Diamond Corp

rise and low-rise residential units are created, along with extensive office and retail space, parks and a community arena. It will have access to an LRT station that will be part of the new crosstown line.

“Transit is fundamental to creating mixed-use nodes,” says Diamond. “We felt because of the LRT, there was the opportunity to transform an old, industrial area that was not that successful to a vibrant mixed-used community where people could live, work and shop.”

Diamond believes the last 10 to 15 years have been transformational in Toronto, as the city becomes increasingly pedestrian- and cycle-friendly. People are tiring of long commutes, they want to be closer to their jobs and cultural institutions, and they are prepared to live in smaller units, he says. And there is more transformation to come yet, says Diamond.

When considering a site, Diamond says developers have to look into the future, imagine what the city will look like 10 years from now and consider how their plans will fit with that vision.

“That’s what is so exciting to this business and bringing creative thought,” he says. “The city of Toronto is one of the most special places on earth and there should be lots of opportunity.”

