

# Globe Real Estate

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## ARCHITECTURE

### OLD ON THE OUTSIDE

### MODERN ON THE INSIDE



A buttoned-down home in Forest Hill gets an interior facelift from architect Heather Dubbeldam. **Alex Bozиков** reports

Stairs from the wide-open living room lead to the loft at David Liang's Forest Hill home. PHOTOS BY TOM ARBAN



The leafy streets above Casa Loma aren't the place you'd expect to find a slick loft apartment. Instead of old warehouses and factories, they're lined with solid, conservative houses 80 years old or more.

But graphic designer David Liang's apartment there is just as sophisticated as anything down the hill. After a renovation by Dubbeldam Design Architects, it's an open, two-storey living space with crisp details in wood, steel and stone – and taking up just half of the old house.

The house was divided into three apartments long before Mr. Liang took it over in 2004. "My mother had lived here for many years," recalls Mr. Liang, sitting at his glass dining room table in a classic modernist chair, but the interior "was all closed and dark."

He decided to move into the upper apartment, and "knew the skeleton" of what he wanted. "I wanted it to be open," he says, which meant using the existing second floor and carving open the attic to turn it into livable space.

Architect Heather Dubbeldam – a young designer who was a friend of a friend – took on the job of designing a cool bachelor pad for Mr. Liang. » SEE 'FACELIFT' PAGE 3

## DEVELOPMENT

### A new logic for lean times

Builders struggling because of slow sales are turning to a range of incentives to move their product, writes **Carolyn Ireland**

At his new Riverside batch of houses in Ajax, Ont., Craig Marshall is grateful for nature-loving dogs.

"We've had quite a few dogs come out with their owners," says the president of Marshall Homes. "Then they go for a walk afterwards."

The verdant land near a river will accommodate houses with a ravine on one side and a golf course on the other.

"It's one of the nicest sites we've ever had," says Mr. Marshall. "You walk out your door and see a ravine – walk out the front door and see a golf course."

Despite the rare setting, however, sales have been slug-

gish compared with seasons past. Mr. Marshall had hoped to have the installation of sewers and roads under way by now, but he needs to sell about twice as many units.

At a recent preview, prospective buyers were given the chance to put down a deposit before the sales centre opens to the public. About 20 per cent of the units sold at preview. A year ago, Mr. Marshall would have expected to sell 50 per cent.

To spur sales, he has cut the premium for a ravine-side location by 50 per cent. But still, some nervous purchasers cancelled their agreements during the 10-day cooling-off

period that allows buyers to reconsider.

"We had a few more people backing out in the cooling-off period than we would have liked."

At other building sites, Mr. Marshall has cleared out some inventory by listing newly-built houses on the multiple listing service for the first time. The company has sold about five houses this way "since Lehman Brothers" says Mr. Marshall, referring to Sept. 15th when the famed Wall Street investment bank filed for bankruptcy protection in what was the biggest bankruptcy in U.S. history.

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**Lehman Brothers is pretty much the day the real estate market stalled.**

Craig Marshall, president of Marshall Homes

## CONDO MARKET

**Hot high-rise Suites snapped up as one new tower bucks the trend** Page 2

