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# Republic debuts with huge Scarborough Junction development

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**Steve McLean**  
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**Republic Developments** launched a year ago and it certainly isn't easing its way into the business. The company's first project is a 25.8-acre master-planned community called Scarborough Junction in the Toronto suburb for which it's named.



An artist's conception of the Scarborough Junction development planned by Republic Developments. (Courtesy Republic)

"I kind of joke with people that I've peaked at the beginning of my career, because this is a very rare site," Republic founder and president Matt Young told RENX. "We never set out to buy a project this big. We never set out to develop a project this big.

"It kind of just ended up happening that way. We're really grateful that we have this opportunity."

While Young may be starting his tenure as the head of a company, he's no rookie. He began his real estate career in 2009 with **Lifetime Developments** and three years later moved to **Capital Developments**, where he led all development activities.

He had developed, launched and sold more than 7,000 condominium units representing more than 5.4 million square feet and \$4.3 billion in development value before becoming an entrepreneur.

"We are a small team of three and growing," said Young of his colleagues: vice-president of accounting and finance Arben Cani; and associate Vladimir Bogdashkin.

## Scarborough Junction site acquisition

Young grew up in the vicinity of the Scarborough Junction site — which is bounded by St. Clair Avenue East, Danforth Road, a rail corridor and Kennedy Road — so he was familiar with the area.

One of the biggest things that attracted him to the neighbourhood was its inclusion of a **GO Transit** station, where a train can get you to **Union Station** in downtown Toronto in less than 20 minutes.

"Pricing downtown and in other parts of the city was getting expensive to the point that it was pricing a huge amount of people out of the market, especially from 2017 to 2020," said Young. "There was a massive bump in pricing and the average person could not afford even the smallest condos in the city."

Republic first acquired a 4.5-acre site with a skating rink and a sports dome and four other small parcels of land surrounding it before it brought on **Harlo Capital** as its capital partner and co-developer. They then acquired an adjoining 20-acre site, but not without some hard work. Young was rebuffed in his first attempt to buy it but had more success with Harlo involved, as it has a prior relationship with the vendors.

In addition to the rink and the sports dome, the Scarborough Junction site is occupied by a couple of aging industrial buildings that are largely vacant, as well as a church, a few small retail properties and a used car lot.

## GO Transit station a key attraction

"It's been referred to as the Bermuda Triangle of Scarborough by some people who we've come across over this period," said Young. "It's kind of an area that you drive by and don't notice much.

"The fact that it includes a higher-order transit station made me think that there was a real opportunity here to create a community. It's large enough that you can deliver all of the benefits and facilities that you would want to make a great community.

"We can deliver a great park, we can deliver a community centre, we can deliver a daycare and we can do all of those things with such a large canvas."

While most of the Scarborough Junction site is already zoned for mixed-use and residential purposes, about five acres is zoned for employment.

Republic applied to the **City of Toronto** for official plan and zoning by-law amendments on Oct. 27 and Young is confident they'll be granted because "it makes the most sense for the city and the long-term future of the neighbourhood."

## Scarborough Junction plans

The plan for Scarborough Junction covers 10 development blocks that will include 17 residential buildings ranging in size from 12 to 48 storeys and encompassing 5.27 million square feet. They'll have 5,818 condo units, including 22 live/work units, and 801 purpose-built rental units.

Also proposed are: 165,000 square feet of retail space, including a grocery store; a 40,000-square-foot community facility; a 10,000-square-foot daycare centre; a new 5,780-square-foot GO station; a 4.63-acre park; 3,666 parking spaces; a number of privately owned but publicly accessible spaces, including a public square surrounded by retail; plazas throughout the site; and a live/work pedestrian mews.



Republic Developments founder and president Matt Young. (Courtesy Republic)

**Giannone Petricone Associates** is the architect and **DTAH** is the landscape designer. **Bousfields Inc.** is in charge of planning, **BA Group** is overseeing transportation planning and **Counterpoint Engineering** is heading servicing and civil engineering activities.

Young expects to have all of Scarborough Junction's approvals within 18 months. As soon as those are secured, the first phase of construction could start within two years. There's some contamination to remediate and site servicing and road construction will need to be done before building development can begin.

A tentative phasing plan is being assembled.

"If we can start construction on the first phases within four years, it's not unreasonable to expect that with decent absorption we could be building at least one to two new phases per year," said Young. "It's probably a 10-year construction period for the overall project."

## Republic's future plans

While Republic doesn't yet have anything else in its development pipeline, Young said it's working on putting a few deals together.

"We expect we're going to be a fairly active builder over the next 10 to 20 years. If that means picking up smaller projects on a one-by-one basis or finding other master-plans in other markets, we'll be looking at all of those things."

Republic would consider developing in other markets, but its preference is to focus on the Greater Toronto Area.

"The growth that we're expecting to see over the next 10 to 20 years is enormous and it's going to take a massive effort from the entire industry to service that growth," said Young. "I think Scarborough is probably going to see the most growth of Toronto's neighbouring suburbs over the next 20 years."

Young also likes the prospects for building in other suburban markets with convenient public transit access to downtown Toronto, especially with the way COVID-19 has changed some people's lifestyle expectations.

"I don't think you necessarily have to live right downtown to be close to work anymore. People are going to have a lot more flexibility moving forward," he predicted.

"Maybe you can get more and live in a larger place and have a bigger community if you live a little bit farther out and there's a level of affordability that makes sense, but you still have that access to get downtown quickly."

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