

TRADE TALK

Uppal family chooses south Surrey for upscale U Lounge

MALCOLM PARRY



UAGAIN: The 4,500-square-foot U Lounge looks like a natural for Granville Street's entertainment district. Penned by **Robert Edmonds** and **David Nicolay**'s feted Evoke International Design firm, the liquor-primary-licensed facility has the marble walls, dark wood floors, muslin-draped banquettes, 24-seat all-around bar and two private rooms that play well downtown. But three generations of the pioneering Uppal family — Jack, Paul and Terry — built it at 24th Avenue and 160th Street in south Surrey. That's in the Lifestyle Village part of the Grandview Corners shopping centre that will officially open Saturday.

Said to be B.C.'s largest unenclosed such facility, the centre was developed by **Mitchell Goldhar**'s Ontario-based SmartCentres (former First Pro Shopping Centres) firm, and consequently includes a signature Wal-Mart store.

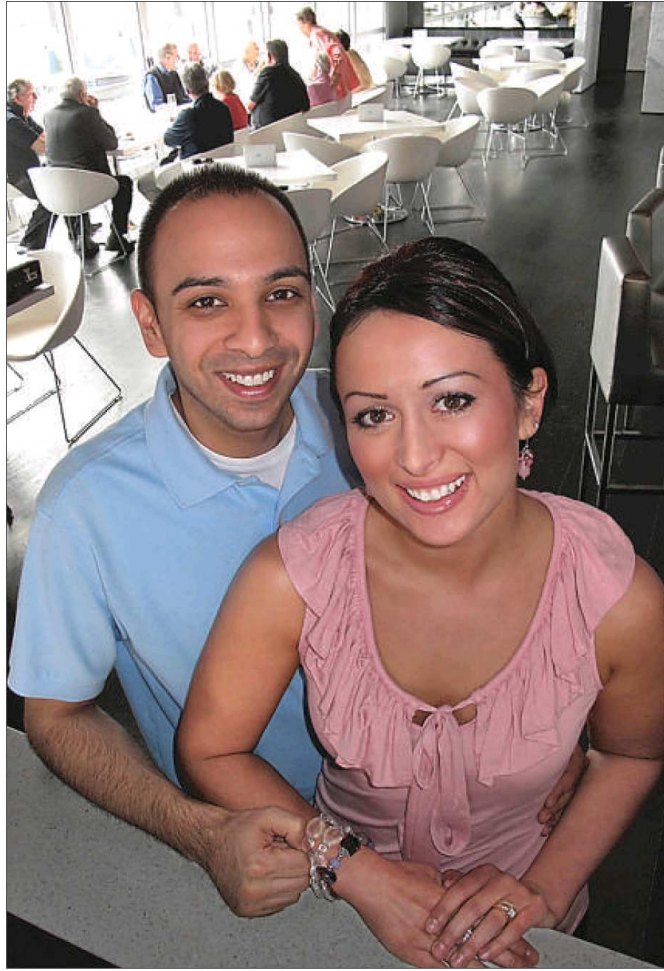
As for Granville Street, **Terry Uppal**, 29, said U Lounge Hospitality Inc. relinquished a location there when failure to obtain a liquor-primary licence would have obliged a midnight closing time. He jumped when realtor **Doug Lucier** found a locale five minutes from the home he shares with wife **Kristan**, the former Independent Pharmacy Innovation Inc. marketing firm principal.

The lounge and an attached 3,300-square-foot liquor store (operated by U Group Entertainment Inc.) cost "just shy of five [million]" to ready, Terry said. He'd honed his hospitality skills when he and father Paul co-managed the Biltmore (now Howard Johnson) hotel. Grandfather Jack, **Bob (Baldev) Khanna** and **Bob Jinnar** paid \$9 million for that Kingsway-at-12th hotel in 2002. Coors Canada (now Molson Coors Brewing Co.) later recruited Terry to successfully market its "older man's golfing beer" to consumers aged 19 to 25.

Today, the youngest Uppal aims U Lounge at patrons he says aren't served by Surrey restaurants and nightclubs: "How often do you go out and it's all adults, it's upscale, the room's nice, the food quality [ex-Joe Fortes **Steve Duyzer** is executive chef] is excellent, and it's catered to adults socializing among themselves." By that he means the likes of Surrey Mayor **Dianne Watts** and councillors **Linda Hepner**, **Mary Martin** and **Barinder Rasode**. Not to mention grandpa Jack, 84, who lunched there Tuesday with a dozen former classmates from Lord Beaconsfield elementary before returning to his owner's office at the 60-employee Goldwood Industries cedar mill.

As for shelved downtown-Granville-Street plans, Metro League soccer forward Terry says an agreement should be signed off within 30 days for licence-lapsed, 4,000-square-foot premises. A "hybrid" pub-restaurant should open there by October, he said.

BUDDY, CAN YOU SPARE A VINE? Even with the global economy emulating *Apocalypse Now*, Sotheby's International Realty Canada team leader **Christa Frosch** believes multi-property owners love the smell of vinifera in the morning. Ergo the \$100-million Vineyard Collection of 17 nine-to-17-acre Okanagan wine-producing properties she, fellow realtors **Bran-don Groenveld** and **Maria Peters**



Terry Uppal, here with wife Kristan, built the \$5-million U Lounge in south Surrey but says original plans for downtown Granville Street will materialize soon.



Christa Frosch's Sotheby's realty team launched a \$100-million collection of Okanagan vineyard-estates starting at \$2.1 million.

and business manager **Chad Mac-Tavish** are offering domestic and international buyers. Most would already own several home and home-estates, Frosch said.

Her semi-retired developer-father **Karl Frosch** built several Gateway Casino properties, but Frosch says there's no gambling with her \$2.1-million-and-up offerings. "B.C. is one of the world's incredibly safe places to live," the longtime equestrian competitor said. "And I have German clients who don't know where to place their money now."



Cam Watt manages movie producer Bill Vince's legacy at the liquor-licensed District 319 theatre on Main Street.

Some such clients likely come from a 1996-2003 stint in Europe, where Frosch marketed the Frankfurt-based Stiller Immobilien development firm's \$140-million Hanvaer Landstrasse project. Later, after two years selling West Vancouver waterfront homes, she gained Okanagan know-how from a project-sales gig (with MacTavish) on the Kettle Ridge scheme, where 22 lots fetched \$300,000 to \$500,000 each as sites for \$1.5-million homes. The Okanagan Collection and Vineyard Collection estate groupings followed.

"People want 10 to 20 acres," she said

of planted vineyard land that fetches \$190,000 to \$300,000 per acre. She expects Asia, Canada and Europe to each generate a quarter of buyers, with 20 per cent from the U.S. and five per cent from Britain.

In Manhattan last week, Frosch enriched a PowerPoint presentation to Sotheby's executives with a case of Lang Farm reserve Riesling 2007 from **Keith Holman**'s Holman Lang operations on the Naramata Bench. The gambit went down well, backing up Frosch's pitch for Sotheby's auction-house side to undertake a private-cellar sale here. That reportedly struck a chord, given the firm's recent one-day, \$51-million auction in Hong Kong. As a result, Frosch says she'll escort eight B.C. ice-wine producers there this fall.

She's even in the beverage-alcohol game herself, with the Nons Drinks & Giffard firm she and husband **Sherif Ahmed Stederth** founded in 2004. It represents liqueurs and cognacs eau de vie, as well as non-alcoholic syrups from the Giffard family concern in Angers, France.

That's a two-way street for Frosch, who is selling a Loire Valley castle for Sotheby's. "There's a quite a lot of people looking for castles," she said of properties that, in their own way, may be as safe as Canadian vineyards.

MAIN MAN: **Bill Vince** died in June last year at age 44 after producing the Oscar-winning *Capote* and 35 other feature films. He also left a physical memorial in surroundings far different than those of his West Vancouver upbringing. It's the 200-seat District 319 theatre at Main-off-Cordova Street, which Vince developed after 2003 at a cost of \$3 million. Today, audiences occupy deep red armchairs and enjoy not popcorn but beer, wine and spirits from a bar located beneath a booth equipped with state-of-the-art 35mm and DVD Blu-ray projectors.

You can't just walk in. But two or three clients weekly pay \$3,500 to rent the unique, liquor-primary-licensed facility with total occupancy of 325. One such function will occur May 2, when \$200 ticket-holders may raise \$75,000 to support William Vince Foundation — www.wvffoundation.com — programs that direct at-risk youth to become filmmakers.

So said District 319 leaseholder **Cam Watt**, who attended West Van High two years ahead of Vince. Watt co-founded the Brandi's exotic-dance club a decade ago and, with now-late brother **Dunc**, sought to redevelop Palm Springs' The Dunes motel into 27 luxury suites. He now manages District 319's doings and is managing landlord on the Vince family's adjacent 301 Main Street premises that house Waves coffee bar and the Atira Women's Resource Centre. Similarly held 325 Main Street is occupied by non-profit Building Opportunities with Business (BOB) that facilitates inner-city investment and activity.

Bill Vince's sister and foundation trustee **Lyn** "is the keeper for everything he was doing," Watt said. Next up, given city hall's say-so, is development of the Vince properties' cross-alley 25-slot parking lot, which Watt said should be developed for community art and other projects at a likely cost of \$200,000. One project may be a bike-in (not drive-in) theatre for films to be projected on District 319's back outer wall. A mini-festival of Bill Vince's works could be in the offing, not to mention brother and producer-director **Robert's Air Bud** and other flicks.

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BUSINESS IN BRIEF

NEW YORK

Freddie Mac chief financial officer found hanged

The chief financial officer of the troubled mortgage giant Freddie Mac was found dead at home Wednesday after apparently committing suicide. Police were called to the Virginia home of David Kellermann, 41, by his wife shortly before 5 a.m. Kellermann, who lived in the suburb of Reston, outside Washington, was found in the basement. It is believed that he hanged himself; police said there were no signs of foul play. Kellermann had been Freddie Mac's acting CFO since September, when the U.S. government took it over amid mounting losses in the American housing market. He had worked for the company for 16 years, including as principal accounting officer. In March, Freddie Mac disclosed that senior staff had been interviewed by federal regulators over possible accounting violations.

CALGARY

Q1 profit surge for EnCana

EnCana Corp., Canada's biggest natural-gas producer, said first-quarter profits rose more than 10-fold on gains in the value of derivatives contracts that locked in prices before commodities markets collapsed. Net income climbed to \$962 million, or \$1.28 a share, from \$93 million, or 12 cents, a year earlier, the Calgary-based company said. Revenue after royalties fell 15 per cent to \$4.6 billion.

CALGARY

Precision cuts 1,000 workers

In the latest measure of how deep the slump in drilling activity has become, Calgary-based Precision Drilling revealed Wednesday it cut 14 per cent of its staff — an estimated 1,000 employees in Canada and the U.S. — during the first quarter. The cutbacks were necessary in view of the worst level of oilpatch activity in Canada in 17 years and a sudden drop-off this year in business in the U.S. The company will reduce capital spending this year by \$29 million to a total of \$210 million. Precision reported net earnings of \$57 million in the first quarter, a decrease of \$49 million or 46 per cent compared with 2008.

OTTAWA

Flaherty considers credit cards

Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said Wednesday that he is considering new regulations for credit cards in Canada, without specifying the types of rules he is looking at. Asked about interest rates charged by credit card companies, Flaherty said, "There are a number of issues we can address with respect to credit cards. We are working on several of them. I made it clear in the budget that the minister of finance will be provided with regulatory power. We're working on certain regulations, which I will be able to speak about publicly soon."

OTTAWA

Gaming industry pleads with MPs

Members of Parliament mixed business with pleasure this week — playing some of the latest videogames before hearing a plea from Canada's videogame developers and publishers to protect their copyright. Despite the sagging economy, the video game industry continues to thrive, even as car manufacturers and other big business falters, said Danielle Parr, executive director of the Entertainment Software Association of Canada. Parr said the government needs to quickly reintroduce legislation similar to Bill C-61, a controversial copyright law that died on the order table when a federal election was called last fall.

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