

## EXTERIORS

# 20 Niagara sets standard

It says everything about the speed of change in Toronto that 20 Niagara St. has already become one of a crowd of neighbourhood condos.

When this elegant building appeared in 1997, many observers thought it would never succeed. Wrong location, wrong design, they said.

In fact, 20 Niagara turned out to be hugely popular and now this long neglected inner-city precinct is home to thousands of recently arrived residents.

That should hardly be surprising. After all, the King/Bathurst area comes well-serviced with public transit, proximity to downtown and a healthy stock of old industrial architecture ripe for redevelopment.

Twenty Niagara, a low-rise slab exquisitely fitted into a small site beside Victoria Square, managed to transform the surroundings by revealing the residential potential of the area.

Rather than try to match the Victorian architecture that characterizes the neighbourhood, it plays off its symmetry and solidity. Generous windows and balconies give it a feel of domesticity but also of graciousness.

The main weakness is the strictly utilitarian façade on the west side. It's the price that had to be paid for the other exteriors.

To make matters worse, it hasn't aged

### Critic's Eye

CHRISTOPHER HUME



**EYE-OPENER:** Niagara St. condo started a residential resurgence in the area.

well and has started to look ratty.

Still, 20 Niagara set a standard for condos that still hasn't been surpassed.

**Grade: A**

*Christopher Hume is The Star's urban issues reporter. In this regular feature, he will rate the appearance of various condos around town. He can be reached at [chume@thestar.ca](mailto:chume@thestar.ca).*