

Condo projects draw praise at Kilbourn lecture

BY ALFRED HOLDEN
TORONTO STAR

As usual the fourth annual William Kilbourn lecture, held Monday at the Winter Garden Theatre on Yonge St., was a love-in of people who love Toronto.

And as usual it included many citizens worried about the city's, and the GTA's, future.

Not surprisingly, most outspoken among them was the lecturer himself, architect and Harvard professor George Baird, widely regarded as successor to Kilbourn, the author and alderman who was the city's muse and conscience.

Baird's report in the 1970s, *On Building Downtown*, is credited with redirecting city development toward a more livable, human scale.

The architect, who spends part of his week in Toronto and the other part teaching at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., was particularly critical of the current provincial government and its tax-cut mantra.

Hardly an act of thrift and streamlining, the spending cuts needed to provide tax cuts amount to a huge dis-

investment in vital infrastructure that the Toronto area will need in the future, Baird told the audience.

"It is analogous to the guy at the bar who buys drinks for everybody with next month's rent," Baird said.

But Baird found good

things to say about condominium development.

The recycling of old factories and obsolete office buildings into housing is a positive, even remarkable, development, and is happening in Toronto on a scale that makes the city unique in North America, Baird said.

And brand new condominiums continue to reinvigorate dense city neighbourhoods, Baird said.

About the new buildings he said, "Not all are of the best design, but they contribute to downtown."

On the other hand, some buildings are outstanding, said Baird,



BAIRD



CHERYL HNATIUK/TORONTO STAR

IDEAL IDEAS: Context principal Howard Cohen, centre, and Peter Clewes, right, are receiving high praise for their work. They're seen at Ideal condominium site with developer Stephen Gross.

He praised the vision of former city planner Howard Cohen, whose company, Context Development, has planned several developments that respect the city's neighbourhoods and some that advance a new design vocabulary.

Among the latter is the Ideal, a smallish condominium planned for a site near College and Bathurst Sts.

And in a slide show, Baird gave top markets to the Indigo, a downtown condominium tower on Lombard St. designed by architect Peter Clewes, whose firm more recently designed the Ideal.

Both the Ideal and Indigo feature large expanses of glass, and avoid kitschy, historical ornament on their exteriors.