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BUILDING A CALGARY FOR THE FUTURE

FRANK LONARDELLI CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS OF SUCCESS WITH ARLINGTON STREET INVESTMENTS

BY DAVID PARKER

Frank Lonardelli and his staff at Arlington Street Investments (ASI) are celebrating five successful years since he launched the firm. Lonardelli is an EY Entrepreneur Of The Year finalist, a three-time PCMA commercial real estate deal of the year award winner and a Business in Calgary Leaders Award winner, but his ambitious business career didn't start that way and began many years ago in Winnipeg dating back to the time he graduated from Gordon Bell High School.

Lonardelli was a three sport athlete and his life was all about playing for the team. But when he was offered several scholarships at his Grade 12 graduation he had to decline because he fell short on academic requirements. It was a result that was created by a difficult upbringing, little mentorship and an environment that required Lonardelli to keep his head up and focus on surviving. Arlington Street was distinguished as being the murder capital of Canada for the almost 10 years he grew up and lived in the area.

In a Winnipeg Free Press article written in 2009 about Lonardelli's journey, he speaks of the influence of a teacher named Mike Gaston, a black professional athlete who navigated the racial segregation of growing up in Alabama in the '50s. Gaston was always in Lonardelli's ear at Gordon Bell but he literally engaged him right after his Grade 12 graduation and

provided him some encouragement and wisdom to ensure he reset his life's path. Lonardelli went on to get a full athletic scholarship and graduated in political science, continuing on to acquire his postgraduate degree in the U.S.

Lonardelli's realization of the need for education not only gave him his university degrees but made him realize how important it was to have a positive mental attitude especially growing up in an environment like Arlington Street. So, after he achieved a level of success as a businessman he developed the Arlington Street Scholarship and Foundation with an initial investment of \$100,000 and a long-term commitment of a million dollars. The Arlington Street Foundation is one of his greatest and proudest achievements as a businessman which he is actively involved in and returns every year to speak to students about his life's journey, the obstacles he had to overcome and the message that your past does not determine your future. He presents on and believes in "Manifest Destiny."

Growing up on Arlington Street in Winnipeg, his father had passed away when he was three and he says helping support his Italian immigrant Mother and his three sisters resulted in life lessons he appreciates very much today. He launched his first business in 1997 after deciding not to attend law school and grew that to one of the largest privately-owned food-service



companies in Western Canada which he then sold in 2003 all the while being fascinated and investing into real estate in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Phoenix and Ottawa.

Lonardelli came to Calgary in 2000 and began to amass a real estate portfolio in the city beginning with older properties in the Inglewood, Ogden and Victoria districts and later in Phoenix, Arizona.

Today his focus is primarily on redevelopment projects along 17th Avenue SW, although one of the early acquisitions was a number of older residences on 17th Avenue SE, close to the Stampede Grounds. Thanks to his keen eye for assessing development prospects in what he refers to as “The Path of Growth” as he travelled along the 17th Avenue corridor, he believed there was a real opportunity to consolidate many of the legacy properties and redevelop them into mixed-use

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developments as well as create a high street. Under the ASI flag, he began to acquire buildings between 5th Street to 14th Street SW that he believed would be the best development sites along the busy corridor.

Meanwhile in 2012, CEO Lonardelli purchased a two-storey building at 718 8th Avenue SW, took it down to the steel and rebuilt it with a new envelope as a classy four-storey with a glass-enclosed elevator tower on the west end overlooking the avenue with retail on the main floor and office space on the remaining three. It turned out so well that ASI located its head office on the top floor; a boutique space contrived by Pop Design Group using creative walls and furnishings by DIRT.

In 2014, visionary Lonardelli began design work using NORR Architects and Pop Design to develop a prime piece of real estate he assembled on the corner of 50th Avenue and Elbow Drive SW surrounded by the well-established, affluent communities of Elboya, Britannia, Bel-Aire and Windsor Park.

The initial idea was to build retail and offices above 219 underground parking stalls but the downturn in the economy caused the project to be put on hold soon after the parking base was completed. Now it is back on track but with the overabundance of office space available throughout the city, the

decision was made to convert the original idea of office floors into 104 luxury residential residences and an adjoining eight-townhouse condominium project along the south side of the development.

They will have the same great views of Calgary's downtown skyline and out to the west, and residents will be close to shopping at the upscale Britannia Plaza and Chinook Centre with good access to Glenmore and Macleod Trails.

Retailers have already made commitments to lease the ground-floor space with Blush Lane Organics taking more than 12,000 square feet on the northwest corner of 50th Avenue for another of its healthy lifestyle markets. Other tenants include Blue Star Diner that has a popular location in Bridgeland; Hedkandi Salon with locations in Bankers Hall, Hotel Arts and the recently opened Henry Singer menswear store in Eighth Avenue Place; and a sixth location for Orange Theory Fitness.

With Lonardelli's passion to help convert 17th Avenue into a future high street for Calgary, he will be relocating his head office to the top floor of the National Block that ASI purchased on the east side of 5th Street that houses the popular National pub on the main floor.

*Continued success and best wishes to
all the Staff & Management Team at
Arlington Street Investments.*



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This move will consolidate operations onto the street where all of the staff can be absorbed with Lonardelli's vision, and keep a watchful eye on progress of work on the 32 buildings on seven separate sites ASI owns along the stretch of 17th between 5th and 14th Street SW. Directly across the street from ASI's new offices is The Fifth on 17th, a five-storey 43,000-square-foot mixed-use boutique retail and elegant

residential development that will start construction in spring of next year.

Another NORR design, it will feature approximately 11,500 square feet of retail on one of Calgary's most vibrant corners, with 55 to 60 unique urban residences above surrounded by a rich metal, natural wood and hip urban edge engineered exterior finish.

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Bookending the active pedestrian-friendly 17th Avenue at the major north-south connector of 14th Street, ASI will build The Sentinel. This is the largest assembled parcel on 17th Avenue at 66,000 square feet and allows for over 350,000 square feet of gross leasable/sellable feet. The project covers the whole block from 17th to 16th Avenues that is now home to the Jimmy Condon Building but also includes the extensive parking lot and houses to the rear.

Kitty-corner, ASI owns the heritage Bank of Nova Scotia building – better known to many as the former home of American Apparel – that has been fully leased to Prema Wellness Centre.

Lonardelli's vision for 17th Avenue is to honour what the community is looking for; redeveloping sites to provide the basis to tailor unique shopping, entertainment and living experiences throughout this most popular cultural destination.

In order to create a legacy through innovative and thoughtful design, ASI has formed a new division called Arlington Street Developments. Headed by Ron Poon in the role of President, the executive team is made up of Ralph Bennetsen, Vice President of Development and Acquisitions, and Daniel McLean, Vice President Construction.

Poon recently retired from Norr Architects Engineers Planners where he was Executive Vice President-Canada.

At Norr, he was responsible for the design of many of ASI's projects so he has a good understanding of the company's vision and mission and is the perfect fit for this company at its moment in time. Lonardelli advises that the next five years will see ASI triple in size and have positions in the U.S. but it will focus on execution one project at a time. "We're a long way away from what we want to achieve," Lonardelli says, but given what has been accomplished in the first five years we look with great appreciation and to this company's future.

Named after a rough neighbourhood in Winnipeg, Frank Lonardelli has taken Arlington Streets to prestigious highs in its five-year history, while transforming some of Calgary's streets into the most coveted areas in the city.



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