Max Risen is looking forward getting rid of his car and cycling to work. Risen, 29, founder of a software startup company, and his girlfriend recently purchased a condominium on the 29th floor at 159SW, the building planned for the southwest corner of Sherbourne and Wellesley Sts.

He currently lives near Avenue Rd. and St. Clair Ave. W., and drives to his office in Toronto's Chinatown neighbourhood.

"I have a bike now, but I primarily cycle just on weekends on trails and paths," Risen said.

"I am really looking forward to being able to cycle a lot more, given how conducive the area is."

Alterra, the developer and builder of 159SW, planned the 36-storey, 360-unit building with owners like Risen in mind.

Rob Cooper, left, president of builder Alterra, with Max Risen, a buyer at the new, bicycle-friendly condo 159SW at Wellesley and Sherbourne Sts.

Rob Cooper, left, president of builder Alterra, with Max Risen, a buyer at the new, bicycle-friendly condo 159SW at Wellesley and Sherbourne Sts. ELAINE SMITH SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Life in the cycling lane

New condo is geared toward buyers who belong to Toronto's booming bicycle culture

The 36-storey 159SW condo building features 360 suites.
Bikes top of mind for condo developer

BICYCLES from HI

Scheduled to open in 2019, it will be situated at the intersection of two major bike paths. Although the city of Toronto requires all developers to provide “a minimum of 1.0 bicycle parking spaces for each dwelling unit” per Bylaw 59-2013, Alterra has gone a step further and will provide each unit at 159SW with an individual bike locker.

There will also be a bicycle repair room and a visitors’ bike-parking area.

The approach has earned the building a perfect 100 rating from Bike Score, based on proximity to bike lanes, hills, destinations and road connectivity, and the percentage of bike commuters.

Rob Cooper, president of Alterra, an avid cyclist, is excited about the opportunities 159SW will offer.

“There are an unbelievable number of cyclists in the city now compared to 10 years ago — and it’s great,” Cooper said.

“The Sherbourne-Wellesley area is home to two of the city’s busiest bike lanes that accommodate a combination of recreational and commuter cyclists. We felt there was a benefit to being able to represent our building as bike-friendly.”

This past June, Toronto city council approved, in principle, a 10-year cycling network plan that doubled the amount of funding for bicycle lane creation and maintenance citywide to $16 million annually from $8 million.

Cooper explains 159SW’s bike-centric features: “The bike locker comes with the condo unit and you can do your own bike repair in the dedicated room, so you don’t need to take your bike up to your own unit.

“All the equipment will be provided by us; the room will be secured for residents only with tools attached to the work table. You can use it and leave it for the next person.”

“Bicycles aren’t top of mind for developers,” said Linda Pinizotto, a realtor and president of the Condo Owners Association.

“There are very few buildings with actual bike spaces for sale. Some condos have a room in the parking garage for storing bicycles and others have a storage room outside an exit, behind the building.”

Most condominiums don’t allow owners to store bikes on their balconies, but at 159SW, it won’t be an issue. Cooper says owners who aren’t comfortable storing their bikes in the individual lockers are welcome to bring them up to their units.

“People think about bikes as inconvenient, but we look at them differently,” said Cooper, who, from May through August, leaves home at 5:30a.m. for his 40-kilometre weekday rides.

On weekends, he cycles in the Collingwood area and participates in charity rides, such as the annual 200-kilometre Ride to Conquer Cancer this past June.

Features and finishes at 159SW will include floor-to-ceiling energy-efficient windows, wide-plank laminate floors, stainless kitchen appliances and quartz counters, and individual in-suite heating/cooling systems.

Three amenity floors will offer a pet-wash station, fitness studio with yoga room, sauna and outdoor running track, barbecue and outdoor patio areas, lounge with game zones, a library, and private conference room.

Cars aren’t forbidden at 159SW; there will be parking for about 77 vehicles, as well as a car-sharing service on site for residents who occasionally need to use one.

“If a property is well-located close to amenities and shopping, a car can be more of a burden than a benefit,” Cooper adds.

Risen anticipates giving up his car when he moves into his one-bedroom-plus-den unit at 159SW, making use of the car-share program when he needs to visit clients.

“The building’s completion date perfectly coincides with when my car lease is up,” Risen said.

“Cycling to do my grocery shopping or meet friends will be really convenient.

The building is also close to a couple of trails I love, which is pretty attractive.”

An outdoor running track is among the amenities that builder Alterra has planned for residents at 159SW.

> 159SW

| Location: 159 Wellesley St. E., at Sherbourne St. |
| Developer/Builder: Alterra Group |
| Architect: El Richmond Architects Ltd. |
| Units: 360, from 470 sq. ft. to 1,008 sq. ft.; 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom, 1-bedroom plus den |
| Storeys: 36 |
| Bike lockers: 360 |
| Prices: From low $300,000 to $632,000 |
| Completion: October, 2019 |
| Contact: 159SW.com; info@159SW.com; 416-323-1500; fo@159SW.com; 416-323-1500 |
| Sales centre at 527 Parliament St. |

> PEDALS TO THE METAL

2 Indoor TTC bike parking at Union and Victoria Park stations

386 Parking spots at these two stations

20 Subway stations with bike repair tools

218 kms of bike lanes in Toronto

8.5 kms of bike lanes that run opposite to traffic

23 kms of bike lanes separated from vehicle traffic by barriers

$16 million Amount to be spent annually for 10 years on Toronto’s cycling infrastructure

17,000 Number of citywide post-and-rings bicycle lock spots

500-600 New post-and-rings added each year

Sources: City of Toronto staff; toronto.ca/cycling

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