

Fond dream wins award

For 41 years, Lefty Akman and his father built apartment blocks, factories, shopping centres, synagogues and assorted other buildings in Greater Winnipeg.

Although each construction job was equally important to the conscientious Winnipeg builder, Mr. Akman harbored fond dreams that only he himself hoped would someday become a reality.

Ever since he first started in the construction trade in Winnipeg in 1930, he has wanted to build a luxury apartment building. Not just any apartment block or one that could easily be matched within the local construction industry.

"It had to be something special," said Mr. Akman in an interview recently.

In June, 1969, his company, A. Akman and Son Building Contractors Ltd., of which he is president, ironed out all the financial details that had complicated his plan for an exclusive apartment building, "something unique." He had been working closely with a Winnipeg architectural group, The Ikoy Partnership, and with Anita's Interiors Ltd., and the plans for a 19-floor, 103-suite luxury apartment building were complete. Construction on Mr. Akman's dream started that same month.

Fifteen months later in late 1970, Hampton Green, built predominantly with Manitoba materials and situated on a spacious lot at 323 Wellington Crescent was complete.

For Mr. Akman his hopes for his dream project were made complete this week when the Canadian Housing Design Council informed him that Hampton Green had won an award in the multiple-housing category of

the national awards competition.

This was a great achievement because the award, presented Thursday to Mr. Akman in Ottawa, was the only one received in Manitoba. There were 75 applications for that particular category in the competitions held across Canada every two years. The awards began in 1957.

Mr. Akman is the first to admit that basic business is important to his company, but he always wanted to build a place "I would want to live in myself and would be just as proud of as my own home."

So, in order to attract people to live in the Hampton Green apartments, Mr. Akman decided the apartments must be equal to the homes prospective tenants lived in. "Having faith in community acceptance, we were willing to take the financial risk."

The Akmans have been building apartment blocks in Winnipeg since the early 1920s. And the apartment blocks the Akmans built on Broadway were the first post Second World War apartments with monthly rentals of \$100 for the suites.

And 20 years ago they built the first so-called high-rise apartment in Greater Winnipeg — Hampton House, located immediately west of Hampton Green.

"The rentals at that time for Hampton House were astronomical," said Mr. Akman. "They were \$175 a month."

He built these two apartments, and the first motor hotel in Winnipeg with a fine dining room (it was the Charterhouse Motor Hotel, but is now called the Sonesta) and scores of other buildings.

They didn't spare the expense when Hampton Green was under construction. "We just kept improving it as we went along."

Hampton Green, which employs 10 full-time employees to keep security in the building and to park tenants' cars no matter what time they arrive home, was built with two principle purposes in mind — security and service for the tenants.

It offers such added features as visitors' cars when arriving for special holidays and vacations are parked in a heated parking area. The apartment has 160 per cent parking capacity.

"Security... well, I can't stress that enough here. We have no problems here and that's good for this modern world where security can become a problem. We operate on the basis that no one unauthorized enters the building and that's the name of the game."

The apartment building features the use of native Manitoba materials. Selected were Tyndal stone walls and Seddon's corner exposed aggregate for the pre-cast which makes a monochromatic finish on the exterior.

All the balconies — and some apartments have as many as three balconies leading off different rooms — are positioned in such a way that each is private. This ensures complete privacy for occupants from adjacent properties. It was foremost in the minds of the planners, said Mr. Akman.

The apartment building is situated 150 feet back from the street line with the area between the street and the front intensely landscaped, presenting an aesthetic setting.

The choice Wellington



Crescent property could have been zoned for a much higher density multi-dwelling.

"If we had done that it would have been to the detriment of the city," explained Mr. Akman.

"Our zoning bylaws as constituted are adequate to operate within. The board of adjustment should be allowed to make only minor changes."

Relaxing the zoning regulations in a particular area, explained Mr. Akman, are basically the things that destroy a city.

"Bad zoning is the most destructive force in a city because anything poorly conceived is there for the next century, ultimately creating a slum."

Mr. Akman said Hampton Green apartments were

built large and well-lighted with the singular purpose of making them as attractive as a luxury home. The smallest apartment is 1,350 square feet and the largest typical suite has 2,200 square feet. Typical apartments have nine-foot ceilings while the top two floors have 10-foot ceilings while the five suites on these floors have wood-burning fireplaces.

The rents? That's another story. The lowest is \$357 per month, the most expensive typical apartment is \$457. Special apartments run more than \$700 per month.

Hampton Green is one of Winnipeg's most luxurious apartments. It has all the privacy and amenities of a home, yet offers tenants freedom from all the responsibilities of a home.

