

NEW HOMES

Paris has a lot to offer

Plus, a river runs through it



MARTIN SLOFSTRA
EDITOR'S
NOTE

A curious thing happens when new home buyers come to visit the sales office of Riverside Paris, says Kathy Di Silvestro of Crystal Homes, one of the two builders involved in the project.

Of course, they come inside to look at the floor plans and check out the new models, but then they end up staying awhile.

They will sit on the banks of the Grand River and watch the canoes and kayaks go by, their kids will play

on the ample, open spaces and fields of this former golf course site, or they will use the existing trails to go for a hike.

And so, a visit to this new home site also offers an excellent chance to experience the nearby amenities.

As for Riverside Paris, it will consist of 140 new homes (plus or minus) which will be the first phase of a six-phase, 10-year build out brought to you by Fernbrook Homes and Crystal Homes.

There's an interesting blend of contemporary and classic designs, and quite the selection of models with sizes ranging from 1808 sq. ft. to 3457 sq. ft., and priced from \$619,900 to \$879,990.

Beyond that there is also the small town of Paris — considered to be one of the prettiest in Ontario — and fair to say, has been below the radar of new home buyers.

The crown jewel is the Grand River and the promise of riverside living. Key among the selling points is its



Paris, Ont has been called one of the prettiest towns in Canada.

close proximity to Kitchener-Waterloo (40 minutes), Cambridge (20 minutes), Hamilton (20 minutes) and Brantford (10 minutes).

But really as a small town, Paris stands on its own. The downtown area, with its Old Ontario character, is one of its key attractions and is only a five-minute drive or 20-minute walk from the new home site, says Di Silvestro.

Having myself walked around this former golf course and toured the downtown Paris area, I have to say it is also an interesting take on where new home site development is headed.

Some of the local golfers may beg to differ (Paris Riverside is being built on a 151-acre site that included the old Paris Grand Country Club which had been in 100 years of operation and closed in 2017) but building new homes on land formerly occupied by golf courses is a positive trend worth watching — if done right.

(The other example of this happening is the highly anticipated Glen Abbey Encore Grand Opening involving six builders and scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 21.)

Quality of life is really what new home development should be all about, better yet if a site like Riverside Paris can use some of existing amenities of a former golf course such as trails and pathways, and make them available to new home residents and the public in general.

There is a huge appetite for more housing and healthy lifestyles — particularly baby boomers who might be looking to downsize or young families wanting to buy their first home — and on so many fronts, small towns like Paris are uniquely able to offer.

Future Toronto residents face water crisis



RICHARD LYALL
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We need to build parking above ground. Why? Toronto and the GTA are in the middle of a water crisis — not a shortage from your tap, but a serious challenge managing everything flushed down your drains, falling from the sky or collecting below ground.

The City of Toronto has completed two of four workshops updating its Groundwater Management Strategy, including consultations with the development community. Ultimately, they want to explore future infrastructure planning and groundwater discharge system options.

The focal point here involves high-rise buildings with underground parking garages, which commonly encounter issues with groundwater.

As you may have read in this space, building underground parking spaces isn't ideal. Typically when excavations extend deeper than two storeys, there is an excellent chance of encountering groundwater or penetrating the water table.

Toronto Water wants underground parking structures of new condo buildings to be completely watertight: without underground drainage systems, it is unrealistic to permanently keep water out indefinitely.

Equally as important at a time when we witness more frequent heavy rainfall in the GTA, stormwater management is crucial, yet Toronto is plagued with antiquated combined sewers (stormwater and sanitary sewers combined into a single pipe).

During wet weather, the volume of stormwater may exceed the sewer system's capacity and the sewer may overflow, which can cause basement flooding and release untreated sewage into our rivers and lakes.

Or worse. Look at what happened near Jane and St. Clair when two men were trapped in an elevator inside a flooded underground parking lot — it was a huge relief that the police arrived in time to save them.

In recent years, some condo developments have constructed watertight, underground parking structures at the behest of the City. But ultimately, new-home buyers

pay for this unnecessarily complicated construction practice to alleviate some burden on Toronto's aging sewer infrastructure.

Instead of finding an innovative solution, City policies have further eroded affordability by mandating watertight underground parking structures.

As per a recent report by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, a parking spot in one of these new garages costs between \$80,000 to \$100,000.

OK, Lyall, give me a solution, you say. No problem, folks — tell your city councillor to start building above-ground parking structures. With the demand for parking falling every year as transportation habits evolve — more people are relying on ride-hailing services such as Lyft and Uber — parking demand will fall in the coming decades.

Therefore, the parking spaces we need now might be obsolete in 20 years. Unlike Underground parking, above-ground parking can be repurposed for residential or commercial uses.

We all know there is a desperate need for creativity in building spaces for new residents and businesses in a city and region that's growing exponentially year over year.

To accommodate future Torontonians, we must continue urban intensification of our housing products — not just high-rises, but also the missing middle — mid-rise condos (four to 12 storeys), stacked townhomes, back-to-back towns, sixplexes or even laneway homes.

And let's not forget above-ground parking structures — which facilitate quicker and cost-effective construction — we need creative solutions to help people find homes.

But in the meantime, this isn't just a prediction; this is fact: constrained sewer infrastructure and stormwater management will be the biggest barrier to overcome for new development and construction as we build to accommodate a burgeoning pool of homebuyers and renters. Let's help with above-ground parking and see where the conversation takes us.

Richard Lyall, president of RESCON, has represented the building industry in Ontario since 1991. Contact him @ RESCONprez or at media@rescon.com.



Right on the banks of the Grand River and on the site of a former golf course, The Paris Riverside sales office has itself become an attraction.



Relaxing and dining on a riverside patio is one of the many attractions offered in downtown Paris, Ont.