

NEW HOMES

CONTRIBUTORS



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industry outlook

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INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

THE BIG
APPEAL
OF SMALL
TOWNS

by hugh heron

One of the best things about looking for a new home in the Greater Toronto Area is the variety of choice you have. You can find high-rise and mid-rise condominiums, townhomes, semis, detached homes, estate homes and more. You can live in the heart of downtown Toronto, a suburb or even a small town – a popular choice with an increasing number of homebuyers. This is good news for home builders, because as the city has grown and land for residential development has become scarce, we have turned to the suburbs and beyond to find locations for our communities.

Whatever the choice, it's all about lifestyle. People like different things, and many enjoy the laid-back atmosphere they find in a small town. Heathwood Homes is building in two small towns right now – Milton and Uxbridge. It's fascinating how these places have a built-in sense of community. In the small town pharmacy I use, I am greeted by the staff with a "Nice to see you." It's a personal touch that our homeowners in those communities tell us they enjoy.

They also appreciate the sense of belonging they feel in a small town, where active interest groups and service clubs foster community awareness and friendliness. Toronto is known for offering tremendous cultural and entertainment venues, but believe me, the arts are alive and well in Ontario's small towns. I am constantly amazed at the opportunities for visual artists, sculptors, writers, musicians, filmmakers and actors.

In Uxbridge, for example, the Uxbridge Arts Association and Celebration of the Arts inspire and promote community theatre, studio tours, juried art shows, Art in the Park and other artistic outlets. Under the umbrella of Arts Milton, that town has choral and theatre groups for adults and children, a concert band, youth symphony and much more. Most small towns have a Lions Club, Rotary Club, Optimist Club, Historical Society, Horticultural Society and 4-H Clubs, where residents of all ages can get involved.

And sports lovers will find some of the most passionate groups in the province in smaller towns. In fact, the hockey arena is



often the centre of activity for hockey leagues from minor to old-timer, as well as being used for home shows and other special events. Baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse and curling leagues are also popular.

As for annual festivals and events, residents of small towns put their hearts and souls into making them special. The Santa Claus Parades in Milton and Uxbridge are exciting, as are these towns' Canada Day celebrations and fall fairs that celebrate their agricultural roots.

Another thing many of our homeowners tell us is that they are surprised at the range of amenities these towns have, including a variety of restaurants from fast food to fine dining. Shoppers also enjoy access to country boutiques in preserved heritage buildings, big-box stores and everything in between. When GTA residents need something they can't find in town, the drive to Toronto is easier than it's ever been, with major highways such as the 404 and 407 expanding, as well as GO train and bus service. This is great news for residents who don't own a car but would like to take courses at an out-of-town college or university, or head to the city for other amenities. Talk about having the best of both worlds!

People look for different things in a place to live. Urban living has wonderful advantages for those who thrive on being in the hub of things, and Toronto is one of the best cities in the world to be part of. Others want to come home to a slower pace, and Ontario's smaller municipalities are perfect. Aren't we lucky to have the choice?

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