

HIGH ON THE Hill

STORY **WALTER FRANCZYK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**



Olympic gold medal winner Dara Howell says the Muskoka Ski Club is where she comes to have fun. Developers of TreeTops at Hidden Valley expect families in their new condominium development will do the same.

THIS PAGE & OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Natural light floods the living room of Club Leisure Corp.'s model home where designers created casual, stylish comfort. The glassed balcony overlooks Peninsula Lake and a nearby golf course. **TOP RIGHT:** Club Leisure partners Lesley Gregory and Adel Marco developed the 12-acre property from a homeowner's point of view. **RIGHT:** Cascading roof lines merge homes with the landscape.



Club Leisure Corp. is building a community of 120 homes on an escarpment of sloping forest land on the western edge of the Hidden Valley Highlands Ski Area, where Howell first learned the skills that helped her win gold in slopestyle skiing at the 2014 Olympics. Each TreeTops condo comes with a family membership with the ski club. Residents will be able to ski down to the Hidden Valley lifts, enjoy the slopes and ski home for lunch or at the end of the day. "It's rare to see," says Adel Marco, a Club Leisure partner.

But with stunning vistas of Peninsula Lake and the surrounding landscape, TreeTops condos aren't only for skiers. Four beautiful golf courses are just minutes away. Across the road is fine dining and year-round entertainment

Continued on page 39



at Deerhurst Resort, plus hiking trails that intersect the surrounding forest. A ski club membership provides exclusive access to a private beachfront property, a boat launch and docking facilities.

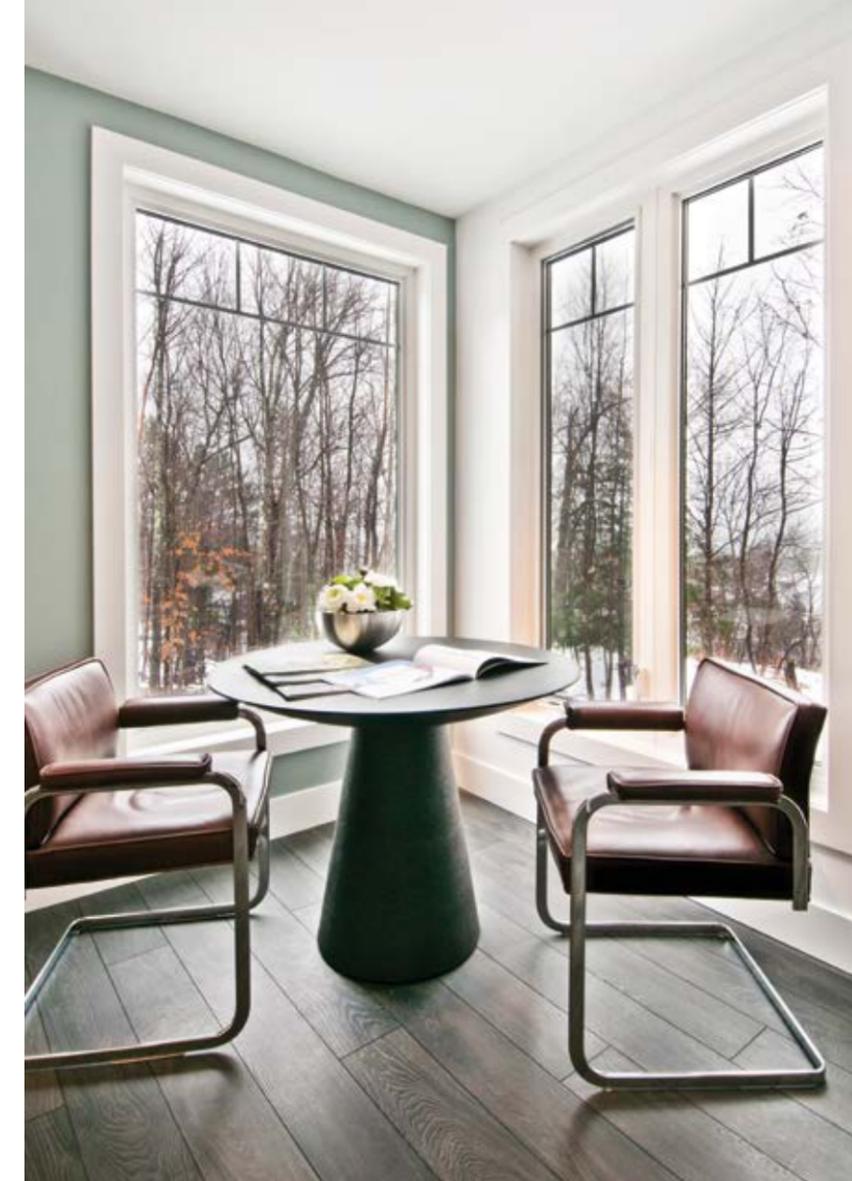
“We wanted to be able to deliver views and we wanted to be able to put the homes in an active environment, whether you are a skier or like to hike or like to do other sports,” says Lesley Gregory, another Club Leisure partner. “We wanted to have drama and wanted to have views and wanted to have it very nested and natural.”

As the property ascends the slope, scenery grows more spectacular, says Marco. “The view is magnificent up there,” he says. “Because there is an escarpment, the views are fantastic.” To protect the vista, Tree Tops acquired and registered a view plane for the right to prune trees on the adjacent property below the escarpment. “Homeowners have the right, in perpetuity, to view and see the lake,” Marco says.

Designed by +VG Architects - The Venton Group Ltd. and built by **Greystone Project Management Inc.**, the new homes tuck into the rocky landscape. They have big, glassy windows (**Ross Windows & Doors**) to maximize the views and interconnect with the outdoors, says Peter Berton, +VG’s partner in charge and lead designer. “Even if you’re in Muskoka on a bad day, in the snow or the rain, or whatever – you are able to experience the outdoors and the beauty of Muskoka, whether it’s sunny, snowy, raining or whatever,” he explains. Architecturally, +VG strived to integrate homes with the environment, using cascading roof lines and exterior finishes with colours sympathetic with the rocks, trees and landscape. MDP Landscape Consultants Limited are the landscape architects while **Attainable Solutions Inc.** brought the landscape plans to life.

Named after Canadian landscape painters Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, seven condominium floor plans range from 1,023 sq. ft. to 1,592 sq. ft. All have two bedrooms. Three larger models offer a den while the largest has a loft, cathedral ceilings and the option of a third bedroom. “The buildings were designed so you could join units, side by side or vertically,” says Gregory. “That gives you the scope to have larger sizes as well.”

Continued on page 40



OPPOSITE PAGE: Track lighting illuminates the stone-topped island that separates the kitchen from the dining area. The eat-in kitchen offers ample space for four or more diners. Cabinets from Cartier Kitchens Inc. and stainless steel appliances furnish the open concept kitchen. **ABOVE:** A den with corner windows provides a contemplative view of the forest and lake. **LEFT:** A one-piece basin in a floating designer vanity lends a modern, efficient style to this loft bathroom.



The second-story loft provides space for a games room, lounge, an office or overnight guests. Each home is furnished with at least two bathrooms. Walls are finished off-white while laminate covers the floors in all living areas.

The model home's interior look is country casual with a modern twist, says designer Bryon Patton of Bryon Patton & Associates. "Our colour palette was inspired by nature, with golds, coppers, reds and greens to reflect the four-seasons landscape, charcoal greys and buckskin tans to reference the fabulous rock formations, and blues for the water and sky," Patton says.

Cabinets from Cartier Kitchens Inc. furnish the elegant, modern kitchen where stone countertops and stainless-steel appliances from Appliance Canada inspire gourmet adventures. Bathrooms are equipped with floating designer vanities and chromed taps. Bathroom floors, showers and tub enclosures are finished with ceramic tile from **Modern Home Carpet One**. Durable, easy-care laminate covers floors in the living areas and bedrooms.

Each condominium is designed to afford a separation of space. Nestled down hallways and corridors, bedrooms are private and removed from the living areas. "We also listened to what we think the residents want," Marco says, explaining that some units were designed with more storage. A separate garage, with more storage, has also been designed for those who want to store a vehicle or boat. "It's an option,"

Continued on page 42



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A southern exposure helps warm the master bedroom. Geothermal radiant floor heating keeps each home cosy all winter. The geothermal system cools homes in the summer.

he says. "If they want a garage, we can provide them with a garage."

Geothermal in-floor radiant heating warms the entire development, ensuring uniform comfort with low and stable operating costs. Energy prices have become painful for people, especially those who bought typical 1980s condos heated by electric baseboards, Gregory says. "They have enormous carrying costs from an energy point of view," she says. At TreeTops, geothermal heating and cooling systems, by Ameresco Inc. and **Tech Air Systems** are a responsible use of renewable resources, she says. "It will manifest itself in better resale value, cheaper operating costs, more consistent and predictable operating costs, and greater comfort."

Environmental initiatives are an important facet of the development, says Greystone

owner Pat Dube. "The building is constructed in an efficient manner. It's all geothermal heat and high insulation values so the people who buy into the project will enjoy very low utility costs as we move forward. That's a big concern to a lot of our buyers on most projects."

He describes it as a great project that tested builders' skills. "It was challenging in that it's all on bedrock," he says. "Building the road and services was somewhat challenging, although if you're not in rock or swamp, you're not in Muskoka," he laughs. "We're pretty used to it."

With its environmentally-friendly bent and its family memberships in the Muskoka Ski Club, TreeTops helps sustain a lifestyle that nourishes healthy living and possibly, even future Olympic champions. There may well be more gold in these hills. **OH**

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