

Condos offer cottage living experience without the hassles

Two different projects in Huntsville provide lakeside living along with activities and amenities close at hand

Cottage living has been a beloved tradition for generations of Ontarians and this love affair with peaceful lakes, woody settings and summer sunsets hasn't lost its appeal.

But sometimes the reality of the cottage may isn't as romantic: Lakefront property prices can put cottage ownership out of reach for many families, property taxes can be hefty and maintenance chores can be burdensome.

One option that provides many of the pleasures of cottage living without most of the headaches is a cottage country condo. Two developments in Huntsville in the Muskokas have come to market with two quite different condo products, depending on your preference.

One is Lakeside Lodge at the venerable Deerhurst Resort, one of Skyline Developments' properties that offers condo living, along with the activities and amenities of a popular resort, and the option to gain extra income by placing units in the resort rental pool. Across the road is TreeTops, a smaller, more intimate development that has appeal to part-time and year-round end users.

"Purchasers are interested in less maintenance (than traditional cottages) and we're next door to a fairly large population in the GTA area," says John Giffen of Skyline Developments. "We're seeing people who want simplicity in their life and are looking for destinations within a two hour drive. It has always been a summer tradition to jump in the car and drive to Muskoka."

Lesley Gregory, partner in Club Leisure, TreeTops' developer, says the fact that the Town of Huntsville is just five minutes away from both developments is a big plus as it has a full roster of services and amenities, including grocery stores, medical facilities, retail shops, restaurants, a world-class theatre and entertainment.

"A lot of our buyers are 55 years and up and they want easy access to services," notes Mr. Giffen.

Another plus is that in a condo development, owners can have a social life that might be lacking in an isolated



cottage setting.

While condo fees are a frequently raised concern among potential buyers, Ms. Gregory says they make economic sense.

"Condo fees really consolidate costs into one bucket. When you own a cottage, you don't think of how the costs can add up, such as if you had to hire someone to fix the roof, and how much goes into annual maintenance," she says. "When you think of insurance and the variety of other things you pay for, in the case of a condominium, you are spreading it across everyone's shoulders, so it's definitely cheaper."

DEERHURST RESORT - LAKESIDE LODGE

The launch of Lakeside Lodge at Deerhurst marks the first new real estate construction there in 25 years on the site of the original lodge, overlooking Peninsula Lake.

Skyline Developments bought the venerable resort in 2011, and gutted and converted old lodgings into 120 completely updated Summit Lodge condo suites that sold out within two days. Lakeside Lodge offers completely new construction and full ownership condos in a range of sizes, starting from \$169,900, ranging from 400 to 1,200



square feet in size.

"Lakeside Lodge will have suites from studios up to three bedrooms. When we were selling Summit Lodges, some buyers wanted larger suites and we can provide that. Of the 162 suites in Lakeside, half will have direct views of the lake," says Mr. Giffen.

The property's zoning does allow for fulltime residential use or "this is a good example of a place someone wants to use for the summer and then close it up and rent it back to us," says Mr. Giffen. "It's a lot less restrictive than other resorts. You have the option to rent your unit out, but

it's not mandatory. When buyers are looking at this type of property, they want to use it when they want to use it. There are no blackout dates or restrictive use."

Some of the buyers will be looking for "really affordable cottaging" says Mr. Giffen, while others may already own a cottage in the Muskokas and are finding the cost of maintenance and property taxes high, or they want a property they can lock and leave. (Even modest cottages in need of work cost \$500,000 or more in Muskoka).

"And there's the social component. In this type of property, you do get to know

■ *opposite page*: Lakeside Lodge marks new real estate construction at the venerable Deerhurst Resort and allows for owners to live there as much as they want or to put their units in the resort rental pool. Amenities include a games room and lounge.

below: TreeTops condos offer casual yet stylish living in a cluster of four-storey buildings in a natural setting and economical operating costs thanks to geothermal heating and cooling. Toronto interior designer Bryon Patton designed the model suite.



your neighbours,” says Mr. Giffen. “When you are on vacation, you don’t want to have to cook every night. We have restaurants and over 50 amenities and we have activities year-round.”

The 162 suites will be in a four-and-a-half storey building with a terrace walkout from the main level to a pool area overlooking the lake. While the pool is among four for the resort and its residents and guests, Lakeside Lodge owners will have a private lounge and games room.

The building, designed by Richard Wengle Architect will have a contempo-

rary flair with peaked gables, pillars and a cupola to reflect Muskoka flavour. The Design Agency is designing the interiors.

Purchasers receive a complimentary Initiation Fee to SkyLife Club (valued at \$25,000), entitling them to Members Only access at Skyline Hotels & Resorts properties.

Toronto-based Skyline owns over two million square feet of real estate, has over 2,600 acres with development rights for more than 7,000 residential units at communities such as Deerhurst, Horseshoe, Blue Mountain and Port McNicoll.

TREETOPS AT HIDDEN VALLEY

TreeTops at Hidden Valley sits on a wooded setting overlooking Peninsula Lake and Lakeside Golf Course. The developer, Club Leisure, forged a partnership with Hidden Valley Highlands ski club to take land it wasn’t using, and because the development is on a ski hill, all owners will be members of the ski club.

TreeTops will have 13 four-storey buildings in all when it’s completed. The second phase, currently on offer, will have 24 units, priced from \$279,900 to \$459,900, from 1,000 to 1,600 square feet. A model home is on site, designed by well-known Toronto-based interior designer Bryon Patton.

Besides skiing, many recreational opportunities are at the doorstep, include golf, hiking, boating, fishing, canoeing, tennis and within minutes, Huntsville’s shopping, medical facilities, cultural and educational institutions. Deerhurst Resort, with its extensive roster of outdoor

activities, restaurants and spa, is just across the road.

TreeTops’ collection of two and three-bedroom condominiums are housed in intimate buildings

designed to fit within the Canadian Shield landscape. The developers also wanted to safeguard condo owners against high energy bills, so are using a geothermal system to heat and cool the condos.

Geothermal uses a system of underground piping that collects heat naturally found beneath the earth’s surface and uses it to heat a building in winter and returns the heat to the ground to cool the building in summer. Each condo building at TreeTops will have its own geothermal reservoir and each residence will be installed with individual heat pump and have in-floor radiant heating.

“In cottage country and very much so in Muskoka, a lot of the condo products are older and becoming outrageously expensive to heat and cool,” says Lesley Gregory, who with Adel Marco is partner in Club Leisure, developers of TreeTops. “We felt that we should be looking to the future and one of the things was to think of the energy efficiency of the buildings and the other was to think of operating efficiency, as well as having landscaping and repairs all cared for.”

Geothermal is a long-proven, dependable technology and buildings with these systems typically use approximately 40 to 65 per cent less energy than buildings using fossil fuels. Geothermal also eliminates CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions. The TreeTops system will be installed, maintained and operated by Ameresco, an award-winning energy management company that is a leader in renewable energy solutions.

TreeTops’ other SmartLiving initiatives include water-saving features, site planning that leaves as many trees in place as possible and natural landscaping. TreeTops will also give owners the opportunity to have a covered garage and additional storage to put their car, boat or other paraphernalia.

Unlike many cottages, which are not useable year-round due to access issues or because they are not winterized, TreeTops owners can live there as much or as little as they want year-round.

“There is a shift in the demographic of people who are going to spend more time there. Boomers are not going to work so hard over the next 10 years and we are trying to build for usability,” says Ms. Gregory. “It’s a place to live and to spend time at, but it’s made so you can do that easily, you don’t have to do chores and if you have to lock it up and go away for winter, you can lock up your stuff with no worries, and you can have guests.”

TreeTops is attracting a range of age groups, from those in their 40s to their 70s and that “creates more flavour,” says Ms. Gregory. Many buyers are coming from the surrounding area but whoever the buyers are, they are looking for ease of living, as well as “a balance between intelligent space without being too small or having too much space,” she says. “It’s not hotel living, it’s not a compromise if you want to live there fulltime.” ■