

Selling a lifestyle, *not Bricks and Mortar*

Doug Coxson, New Hamburg Independent, July 24, 2002

Months from the cloud of dust and diesel exhaust hovering over Haysville Road will settle to reveal the initials stage of a 10-year project to construct one of the largest adult lifestyle communities in the region.

Once completed, 490 condominium units will fill the horizon on the south edge of town between Haysville and Walker Roads. Each phase of the 10-year project will see construction of about 50 homes.

But it won't be as densely packed as it sounds. A total of 4.39 hectares is proposed for parkland conveyed to Wilmot Township, including a large woodlot and kettle lake near the centre of the 48.5 hectare (120 acre) development.

More than five kilometres of walking trails, bike paths and a planned recreation centre are the highlights of the Stonecroft community.

Developer Mike Schout says the project, which began in the spring and has continued at a brisk pace, is selling better than could have been expected considering home buyers are

still viewing a barren field of freshly graded earth and buying into a concept rather than existing brick and mortar.

According to the designer who constructed the scale model of Stonecroft, currently on display at the condominium development's welcome centre, the 1/200 scale model is the largest in Canada.



The first phase, shown in the above photo, comprises 48 units and the construction of Stonecroft Way, the development's main access road.

An L-shaped pond, already full but awaiting the landscaping touches that will make it a welcoming oasis, is strategically placed near the main entrance to Stonecroft.

When the clear-flowing body of water is surrounded by a lush stand of trees, shrubs and water plants, it will reflect the

atmosphere of the community and provide an alluring focal point for potential homebuyers visiting the site.

Recent work focussed on connecting the new subdivision to existing sewer and water lines in New Hamburg. A four-foot wide, 92 meter long tunnel was drilled under Highway 7/8 last week.

Construction on the first few model homes has begun. And once potential homeowners begin the parade through the model units, Schout says sales will take off.

Interested homebuyers have already requested information packages about Stonecroft from as far away as

Calgary, says the camera shy Schout, whose reputation as a developer is well known locally for projects in Baden and New Hamburg.

The adult lifestyle community typically attracts seniors and empty nesters who want to enjoy retirement on their own terms and in a community of like-minded people. With Canada's retired population growing as the baby-boom generation approaches 60, the demand is definitely there.

“Demographically it makes sense,” says Schout.

But some 30-something couples have also expressed interest in the concept. “A lot of people buying homes here are still working,” he adds, including a dentist from Mississauga who plans to commute.



The development’s design borrows from European concepts that focus on the social aspects that make a

community like this work, he says. For instance, bicycle lanes that will run throughout the development area wide enough and directly adjacent to the sidewalk to give people riding enough room to stop and talk to the friends they see walking.

Schout expects Stonecroft’s recreation centre will include popular programs like Aquafit and house a library. The recreation centre’s design will ultimately be decided by residents who move into the first two phases of the development, says Schout, and offer between 14,000 and 16,000 square feet of space an indoor pool and other amenities such as tennis and squash courts.

A large, open parking lot near the highway will accommodate the recreational vehicles and boats many of the residents are expected to own.

Each unit is also wired with state of the art IBM fibre optics that will allow generations of future computer users to stay connected.

Doors and hallways on the homes are wide enough to accept

wheelchairs as the people living in Stonecroft age and want to remain at home.

Stonecroft is modelled on the success of Morningside and Foxboro Green and the idea that retirees are looking for a quieter lifestyle away from the hustle and bustle of the city, but within a commuting distance.

Situated a short drive from the shopping malls and medical facilities in Kitchener and the cultural amenities offered in Stratford, this community’s location is a big selling point for Stonecroft.

Despite the obvious surge of older adults a subdivision like Stonecroft will bring to the area, Schout who has lived in New Hamburg for years and seen the influence of Morningside Village, doesn’t view the town as an adult community.

“Our schools are full and the soccer fields are teeming with kids,” he says.
