

HOMES

Warm up to this

Tea cosy left behind becomes unexpected find for next homeowners, Page 7



On top of New York

Get a sneak peek at the city's exclusive rooftop gardens, Page 6



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THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, SECTION I

'No snow, no mow'

The Legends offers condo convenience in a golf course setting with bungalows where even the windows are washed. Fore.



Guy Gauthier and his wife Ginette Martel Gauthier currently have a home in Orléans and had considered an apartment in the Kemptville community of eQuinelle. They are now looking for a single bungalow in the same project that is aimed at snowbirds and cottage birds who want the space of a single home with the convenience of a no-maintenance condo.



BY SHEILA BRADY

Just like the slogan of technology giant Panasonic, a young Ottawa building firm boasts that it's just slightly ahead of its time when it comes to carefree living.

Instead of fancy high-definition cameras or a flat-screen television, Denis Laporte and eQ Homes have developed maintenance-free homes on the edge of a rolling 18-hole golf course outside of Kemptville.

The Legends at eQuinelle, set to open today, is a new offering in the golf course community. It's dedicated to pampering silver-haired buyers who don't want to worry about shovelling snow, cutting grass or even washing their windows, says the president of

eQ Homes, who has a long history of developing adult-lifestyle communities.

The difference at The Legends amounts to easy living in a single home.

Laporte has worked with architect Barry Hobin to design a series of bungalows around intimate cul-de-sacs by the entrance to the 600-acre golf course community on the Rideau River, about 50 kilometres south of downtown Ottawa. Already home to 110 family homes, bungalows and bungalow townhomes, when finished, eQuinelle will be home to 1,200 singles, bungalows and townhomes of all different sizes and configurations. Urban-dale, a new partner at eQuinelle, opened a line of its own traditional model homes this spring.

PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Legends: New twist for mature buyers

"Just like Panasonic, we are just slightly ahead of our time," pipes up John Montpetit, marketing manager for eQuinelle Homes.

The single bungalows are a new twist on appealing to mature buyers who head south for the winter or to the cottage for big chunks of the summer. "I believe we are the first in the city to offer single homes with these services," says Montpetit, who has collaborated with several builders, including Laporte, through the years.

"You move in and everything is done for you," adds Laporte. "The grass is cut, the snow is shovelled to your door and the windows are washed twice a year. You won't have to worry about gardening because it will be taken care of."

This type of housing — sometimes called manor homes, villas, cottage homes or detached townhouses — is tailored to people who want the privacy of a traditional single-family home with the convenience of a condo. And although it accounts for only a tiny slice of the real estate pie in the U.S., builders and developers there are cautiously optimistic that this hybrid style of house will grow in popularity, partly because it's designed for a growing population: retiring baby boomers.

"Many of my buyers are people who just want to lock the door and leave to go to the lake or to a second home in the winter," says Minnesota builder Forrest Harstad, who offers manor homes in a 69-lot development called the Fields of St. Michael. In the past, Harstad has built townhouses, but he says customers were looking for "homes that don't share a common wall but everything was taken care of."

Tom Budzynski, owner of TJB Homes, has found that empty nesters and retirees aren't the only ones attracted to low-maintenance housing: Busy young professionals and families with young children are interested, too.

"We started with ramblers (or ranch-style) for empty nesters, but now we're doing two-storeys for families with young kids who like that kind of atmosphere," he says, adding that the "no snow, no mow" amenity is giving his development in Blaine, Minnesota, a competitive edge in a tough housing market.

Back in Orléans, Guy Gauthier and Ginette Martel-Gauthier are enticed by The Legends, specifically the largest bungalow, the 1,695-square-foot Nicklaus. The retired owner of eQuinelle Financial Services says he is more than ready to trade their Orléans bungalow for the country and the quiet and green of eQuinelle.

"We have been looking at condos for the past few years, saw The Legends and are keenly interested," says the avid golfer, who heads to Florida for the winter and doesn't want to worry about home-care duties. He'd rather concentrate on his golf score, not cutting grass.

Orléans and the roads are getting very congested, adds Martel-Gauthier, who predicts some of their friends may also like to make the move to the master-planned community off Highway 416.

Prices are also less than living closer to the city core.

Laporte turned to Hobin to design a series of four energy-smart bungalows that are aptly named after golfing giants Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino and Byron Nelson.

The bungalows will be grouped around seven private courts, a short chip away from the 9th hole at the eQuinelle Golf Club. The homes range from the 1,240-square-foot Palmer with its large kitchen and breakfast nook up to the Nelson, with 1,695 square feet including two



The Legends will offer a trio of three-storey apartment buildings with 12 units each, above left, as well as four bungalow models named with a golf theme. The largest is the Nicklaus, above right, at 1,695 square feet.



When finished, eQuinelle in Kemptville will be home to 1,200 singles, bungalows and townhomes of all different sizes. Set on a golf course adjacent to the Rideau River, the community already boasts 110 homes.

bedrooms and a generous sunroom and covered porch. The bungalows have an oversized single-car garage or double garage.

All come fully dressed, with hardwood flooring, granite in the kitchen and stone on the exterior. Prices will start at \$360,000 and go up to \$400,000. A monthly fee of \$130 covers the maintenance program, including gardening duties and window washing. Occupancy is set for late next summer.

Hobin also designed a trio of three-storey apartments that will sit near the bungalows, offering winter-weary buyers underground parking, elevator service to their flats and the promise of convenience, including snow removal and window washing twice a year.

Apartments will range from 1,004 square feet to 1,295 square feet with two bedrooms, a den and open kitchen. Prices range from \$220,000 to \$280,000.

There will be 12 flats in each apartment building, says Laporte, who has been charged by the Regional Group to drive sales at eQuinelle and its other urban and rural sites across the city.

It was Laporte who developed the adult bungalow concept for Tamarack back in 1987 in the Stittsville community of Amberwood, offering buyers sunrooms overlooking the neighbouring golf course, open inside living spaces and a two-car garage. Laporte went on to open other Tamarack adult communities in Kanata, Bridlewood, Hunt Club and Riverside South. All of them featured maintenance-free living and community centres where residents gathered to play cards and hold regular parties.

Other builders in town, including Monarch, Minto, high-tech leader Terry Matthews at the Marshes Golf Course and Phoenix grabbed onto the silver buying trend, launching their own communities for boomers wanting to downsize. Conveniences varied, with Phoenix delivering a comprehensive package of snow removal, grass cutting and common grounds, a swimming pool and attractive club house at its adult community, Tweedsmuir, in the Kanata community of Heritage Hills.

"Not everyone wants to live in a downtown condo," says Laporte, explaining some of the thinking behind enticing boomers to move out

of the city to the tranquillity of living in the country.

Guy Gauthier and Ginette Martel-Gauthier have their bungalow picked out and are waiting for final details before making a decision. "The idea is very appealing. We have wanted to try living in the countryside," she says. "There is a feeling of space and it's not too far from big hospitals or our friends."

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WITH FILES FROM CITIZEN NEWS SERVICES

Getting there

What: The Legends at eQuinelle. An enclave of detached bungalows on cul-de-sacs and apartments in a trio of three-storey apartment buildings. Official launch: today at noon.

What's special: All of the maintenance is covered, from cutting grass to shovelling snow and washing windows. Monthly fees of \$130 for the bungalows and \$250 for the apartments.

Prices: Starting at \$360,000 for a 1,250-square-foot detached bungalow and \$220,000 for a two-bedroom apartment.

Contact: www.eqhomes.ca



Denis Laporte of eQ Homes developed the adult-bungalow concept in 1987. 'Not everyone wants to live in a downtown condo,' he says.

PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN