

FEATURE STORY

Horseshoe Ridge Homes takes LEEDing Role in Barrie Area

**WATER-CONSERVING
FEATURES WILL PUT
LESS STRESS ON
SEWAGE TREATMENT
FACILITY**

BY TRACY HANES

FEATURE STORY

The folks at Horseshoe Ridge Homes didn't have to build their houses in ski country to LEED's (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) high standards for energy efficiency and resource conservation. There is little new home building in the area, thus little competition, so they didn't feel compelled to do it to gain market share.

But the members of the Horseshoe team share a passion and committed belief to sustainable living and felt it was important to potential buyers as well. In addition to saving homeowners substantially on utility bills, with the water-conserving features they decided to include, the homes will also put less stress on existing sewage facilities and future infrastructure.

Horseshoe Ridge Homes, launched in January 2011, includes owners John Boville (former owner of the next door Horseshoe Valley Ski Resort) and his wife Julie, project manager Kevin Dymond and interior designer Christy Bremer. Dymond, who had previously built Insulated Concrete Form (ICF) homes in the area and introduced the Bovilles to the concept of eco homes – an idea they enthusiastically embraced. Bremer put the Bovilles in touch with John Godden of ClearSphere, who helped the Horseshoe team devise a process to get to their goals and supplied the science they'd need to do so.

The model home that recently opened on the site just north of Barrie, adjacent to Horseshoe Valley Ski Resort and its four-season amenities, and overlooking a golf course, is a G50 (Green is 50 home, which uses 50 per cent less energy than a Code-built home) and is registered as a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) candidate, as will all homes in the development.

"I'm surprised how many people are well versed and appreciative of the features we used," said Julie Boville. "They are familiar with things like ICFs and greywater recycling."

Dymond found that many people want ICF foundations and don't want conventional building techniques. Bremer speculated that Horseshoe Ridge's location, surrounded by nature, may attract people more in touch with the environment which may be one reason their potential buyers are so well educated about sustainable features.



FEATURE STORY



Eventually, Horseshoe Ridge will include 530 homes, including singles and townhouses. Three homes are in various stages of completion and currently on offer are 16 detached homes on golf course lots one third acre in size.

The model home is built on a Nudura ICF foundation with R24 insulation value; walls are insulated with Roxul R22 batts and BP "R4" insulated sheathing. Due to the superior insulation and air tightness of the house, the mechanical system could be downsized (from a typically built home of that size) to handle the reduced load. A Lifebreath Clean Air Furnace (CAF) combination with condensing gas-fired hot water heater was installed.

A Power Pipe drainwater heat recovery unit further reduces the cost of heating water by up to 40 per cent by drawing heat from hot water going down the drain and doubles hot water tank capacity.

With Net Zero homes coming in the not-too-distant future, solar will be an important solution to get people off conventional energy sources and the hydronic fan coil can be adapted to take advantage of energy collected from the sun.

"It represents the next evolution of where we need to go and there's no magic required," said Dymond.

The Bovilles, Dymond and Bremer felt it was important to incorporate water-conserving features into the house, even though it was not mandated by the municipality. A Brac greywater system recycles and filters shower and bath water which is used to flush the toilets.

"Sewage is an issue here (in Oro Medonte) and water is important to the municipality," Dymond said. "These houses will use 40 per cent less water which is a huge savings. The builder pays for this (the greywater recycling unit), the home owner gets it. It's an incredible win-win situation. And there's less cost to the municipality to maintain infrastructure."

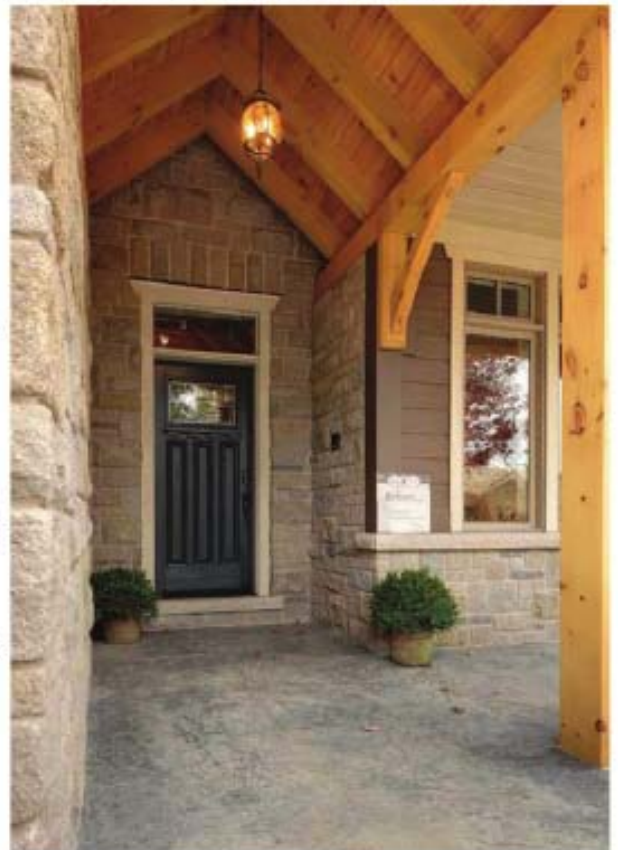
Horseshoe Ridge is served by a private sewage treatment facility which only has capacity for 100 additional homes, said Andria Leigh, development director for the municipality of Oro-Mendonte.

"There will have to be additional capacity for more development to proceed," she pointed out. "The private operator is looking at expanding that facility, but there is a benefit to the municipality in that there is less waste water that doesn't have to be deal with."

The Horseshoe Ridge team and their specialists met with municipal staff and politicians to explain what it was they are striving to do and the features they were incorporating.

"The builder did a lot of research in terms of what was marketable and what was unique to the municipality," said Leigh. "LEED was not being constructed here. There is a niche in Oro-Medonte that wasn't being addressed and there is a segment in the market that wants energy efficiency."

Leigh said the meetings were educational for staff and council and will be useful in setting guidelines for future residential development in the township.



FEATURE STORY

"As the homes get occupied and residents move in and see the success of the LEED features, we'll be interested in their comments," said Leigh. "This was the first development of this type and council is still trying to understand the benefits to the municipality as a whole. When we see the benefits for residents and see how it works, this will be beneficial on a go-forward basis. We haven't seen many of these proposals, being a rural municipality, but it's the direction all municipalities are starting to go."

Although the Horseshoe Ridge houses cost about \$20,000 more than other new homes in the area (yet still much less than resale homes of comparable sizes), buyers seem to recognize the value in the sustainable features and that the houses include more expensive products and finishes, said Julie Boville.

Prices range from \$365,900 for 1,300 square feet to \$485,900 for 2,340 square feet – a bargain compared to new home prices in most of the GTA.

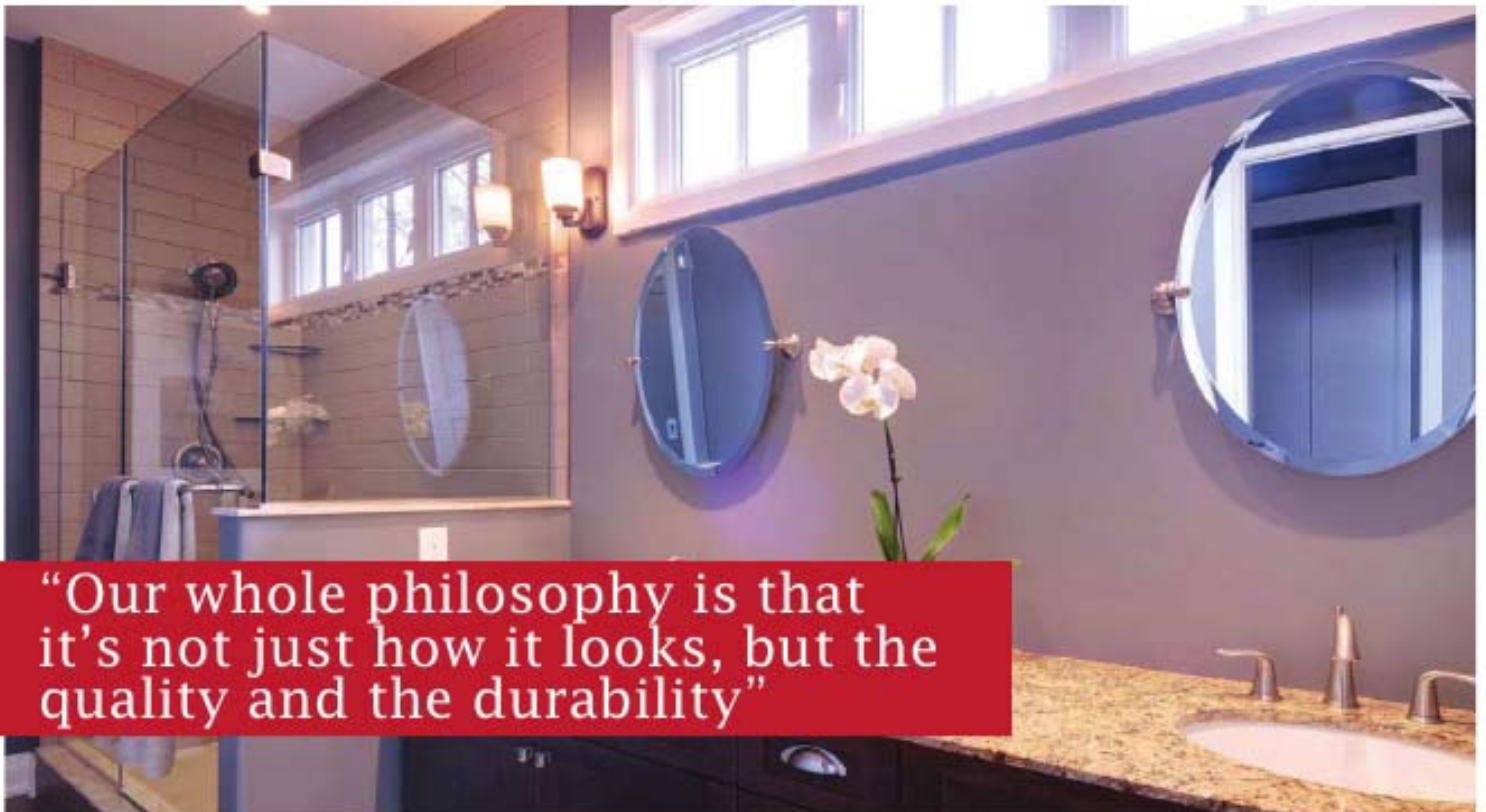
"We are looking to build about 20 homes a year," said Boville. "The first house is the model and we intend to build every house like this."

As interior designer, Bremer looked at the exterior components and interior finishes and investigated where they were coming from, using local sources as much as possible. She also selected low VOC finishes and products that offer durability.

"Kevin and I talked about energy efficiency and durability," she said, while Dymond added that the shell of the house being energy efficient helps to maintain the systems inside the house and has created an environment that is cleaner and more regulated. Because a lot of wood is used in the homes, it's important to make sure it stays properly hydrated to last.

"Our whole philosophy is that it's not just how it looks, but the quality and the durability," he said.

TRACY HANES IS A FREELANCE FEATURE WRITER FOR THE LARGEST DAILY NEWSPAPER IN CANADA AND SEVERAL MAGAZINES. WWW.TRACYHANES.CA



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