

Friday Harbour

Lakeside creation

A decade of planning, two years of intensive waterfront development – and two million cubic metres of soil – have laid foundation for new resort community

Shifting two million cubic metres of soil on 600 acres of waterfront land is no small feat. Indeed, the creation of Friday Harbour – along Lake Simcoe, in the town of Innisfil, about 80 km north of Toronto – is a massive undertaking. That’s the ground-work, literally, for Geranium Corporation’s new all-season resort, which is poised to become a top vacation destination in Ontario after its completion.

A painstaking process that’s taken two years, moving all that soil will allow for the expansion of Friday Harbour’s 40-acre, 1,000-boat-slip marina and the sculpting of an 18-hole championship golf course by world-renowned designer Doug Carrick. Geranium is also setting aside one-third of the 600-acre property for a nature preserve with 7 km of walking trails. As well, the developer is building a new access road and installing water and sewer systems.

“Friday Harbour is a massive undertaking,” says Geranium’s president, Earl Rumm, “and we’ve only just scratched the surface.”

Rumm estimates a final price of \$1.5 billion at “build-out,” which is the urban planners’ evaluation of potential development of a given area. It’s taken nearly a decade to get to this point, as requirements had to be met regarding assembling the land and obtaining approvals from four levels of government even before preliminary work could begin.

Rumm is confident it will all be worthwhile in the end. “This is going to be a world-class resort,” he says. “It will certainly be the best resort in Ontario.”

Geranium has now launched sales on Phase 1 of the residences at Friday Harbour. This first phase of condominiums are comprised of the Boardwalk Suites, which are located in the resort’s Marina Village and range from 430-sq.-ft. studios to penthouses over 1,800 sq. ft.; and Harbour Flats, situated around the harbour and ranging from 500 to 1,330 sq. ft. Units are priced from the \$200,000s to over \$1 million.

Already, 60 of the 150 condos released have been sold, reports Rumm, who advises deal-seekers to act fast. “Our best locations and pricing are available now. As we get closer to building the units, there will still be good locations, but choice always gets limited and prices tend to go up.”

Friday Harbour appeals to families seeking a year-round escape close to the GTA, notes Rumm, and it will also attract empty nesters who want the luxury resort lifestyle but wish to stay close to friends and family in the city.

The resort’s focal point will be Marina Village, which Geranium anticipates will become Simcoe County’s ultimate all-season destina-



The marina basin will enlarge from 4 hectares to almost 14 hectares on completion. Actual photo, taken August 2013.

tion for fun and leisure. The waterfront hub will have boutiques, art galleries and restaurants, as well as a performing arts centre for concerts, festivals and special events. There will also be the year-round Lake Club with spa and gym, along with the Beach and Tennis Club for the exclusive use of property owners.

Friday Harbour will be a boon for the area, notes Barb Baguley, Innisfil’s mayor. “This development will bring a diversity of employment, [new] residents and opportunities to our community.”

Rumm predicts that the development will spur the creation of 1,000 full-time and part-time jobs. Friday Harbour will also lure visitors. “It will definitely be a tourist attraction

with lots of amenities,” says Baguley, “which should create excitement, not only in this community but also across the Lake Simcoe area.”

While it’s still a long way to go before Friday Harbour is up and running, Rumm is already looking forward to the completion of Phase 1 in 2016 and seeing the payoff from his Geranium team’s hard work.

“I’ll be totally gratified when the first people move in and say, ‘It was worth the wait. We got in at a great price and location. And you were right – there’s nothing like this in Ontario!’ ”

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Friday Harbour by the numbers

- 1.5 billion** Total cost (\$) to build Friday Harbour to completion.
- 25 million** Price (\$) of revamping the marina, including excavation and building of 1,000 boat slips.
- 1,000** Estimated number of jobs to be created by the development of the resort.
- 600** Total number of acres comprising Friday Harbour – roughly triple the size of the CNE grounds.
- 200** Number of acres of protected land within the nature preserve.
- 50** Number of consultants involved in working on the design of the nature preserve.
- 20** Number of butternut trees planted to replace every one removed for development.
- 12** Number of metres that sections of the golf course will be raised above the new access road.
- 7** Total distance (km) of trails running through the nature preserve – roughly the same distance between the foot of Yonge St. and Yonge/St. Clair.
- 4** Number of additional km of shoreline being created as a result of the Friday Harbour development.

Nature preserved

Friday Harbour’s 200-acre nature sanctuary aims to showcase the ecological wonders of Simcoe County

Wildlife will be protected from the hazards of the open road in the nature preserve at Geranium Corporation’s Friday Harbour resort. “We’ll be directing critters to go underneath, through culvert systems, to cross from one area to another,” explains Shauna Dudding, Geranium’s vice-president of land development.

To preserve resident wildlife in its new year-round resort, the developer has allotted 200 acres – one-third of the property – for a nature sanctuary that will incorporate underground corridors to enable safe passage for amphibians, reptiles and small mammals.

The sanctuary will also be home to southern flying squirrels, skinks and snakes, along with 5 species of dragonflies and at least 13 types of birds.

Deep-pond habitats will facilitate breeding of turtles and frogs.

Meanwhile, Friday Harbour’s residents and visitors will have access to a 7-km network of trails winding through wetlands, meadows and woodland, where indigenous species are protected.

“It will enhance the experience and allow people to appreciate the great outdoors and everything that happens within this ecological community,” says Dudding. “The educational component will be something that visitors and own-



Marina Village (artist's rendering above) will be the resort’s focal point, along with a nature preserve.

ers alike can take advantage of, as well as local community and school groups.”

The preserve was designed in conjunction with a team of 50 consultants – ecologists, arborists, landscape architects, limnologists and engineers – who also collaborated with government regulatory agencies.

As well, an aquatic management program is underway to maintain thriving fish habitats and remove invasive vegetation species in the marina, which will more than triple in size. There are a

variety of habitats with diverse botanical species in the sanctuary, alongside maple, beech, elm, birch, oak and butternut trees.

Every hectare of trees removed to make room for development will be replaced by two hectares of new trees. In the case of the butternut, an endangered species found on the resort property, the replacement ratio is as many as 20 trees for every butternut removed. The result – Butternut Grove – currently boasts 300 new trees. “We’ve had tremendous success,” says Dudding proudly. “There’s been great survivorship.”