



ANDREA KELLY

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by WAYNE KARL

New home construction is no easy business – especially these days. Housing policy, planning approvals, skilled trades, building supplies... the list of challenges is long.

But so are the opportunities.

That's why GTA new-home builder Geranium, with a vision to create communities that are well planned and executed, also focuses on land acquisition, planning, engineering, servicing, design and construction to become a fully integrated land development and building company.

We spoke with Andrea Kelly, vice-president, land development, to learn more about Geranium's vision, and how, ultimately, it delivers.

You recently joined Geranium as vice-president of land development. How did this come about, and what is your mission at the company?

I've known members of the Geranium team for a very long time. Over the years, we've worked on joint projects, as well as those where our interests diverge, all with the greatest of respect. In 2022, Geranium had a need for a project manager on a contract basis to cover a maternity leave, and I was keen to return to the private sector. Following this stint, the role evolved into a more permanent position.

And what is your vision?

My goal for my time with Geranium is to work diligently to bring exquisite new residential communities to fruition for the families who will call them home. To accomplish this, I plan to mentor and support my colleagues, to share what I have learned over 32-plus years in the industry working with government and community partners, and continue with the practical, solutions-oriented approach in place.

You previously worked with the City of Barrie. How does that experience benefit Geranium?

After 25 years in the private sector, I spent five amazing years in Barrie, initially as planning director and then as general manager of infrastructure and growth management. My time there helped me to understand and appreciate the inner workings of municipal processes, timelines and how recommendations and decisions are made.

Today, I am applying this experience and bringing a distinct perspective to Geranium's wide portfolio of current and future extensive developments, spanning across several regions in Ontario, with a view to ensuring our team continues to deliver ample opportunities to existing neighbourhoods in which we plan to build.

What would you consider your greatest achievement while working for Barrie?

Mentoring and helping to develop a team of leaders who continue to deliver outstanding work for the City of Barrie. I feel privileged to have shaped departments and encouraged colleagues to grow and shine, so that they can tackle all that continues to come their way.

The other thing I am proud of is establishing a collaborative approach toward a solutions-oriented environment. Often in this industry, we face a "no, but" mindset, and during my time at Barrie, I helped to highlight that a "yes, and" approach has so much more to offer all stakeholders, including landowners/ developers, residents and the municipality or city.

I have seen this same collaborative approach through Geranium's leadership, and that's one of the things that attracted me to my current role with the company.

What about Barrie's planning department might municipalities in the GTA learn from?

That there's a benefit to integrating planning and development engineering to have a seamless process from concept to construction. To value the professionals on staff,



accept their credentials, ensure that they are empowered and to remember that they are working in the best interest of the municipality. Invest in technology to streamline processes.

What opportunities do you see at Geranium?

Geranium undertakes complex development projects that require us to find creative and innovative solutions to achieving approvals. We have a talented and eager team, supported by an organization that's invested in a "can do" culture. We're excited to plan more residential communities, make a positive impact on the communities we build in and continue to act as industry leaders.

For example, Allegro in downtown Aurora was a former underused

private golf course surrounded by more than 400 existing homes. After many consultations with the Town of Aurora, all levels of government, ratepayers and local community members, Geranium is successfully bringing to fruition new homes compatible in size to the neighbourhood, with an abundance of greenspace and a large central park, while preserving a significant number of mature trees and maintaining the neighbourhood's character.

Years down the road when you look back at your time at Geranium, what would a successful tenure look like?

Many beautiful communities that deliver the added touches, such

as revised parking standards that reflect the reality of emerging communities, integrating diversity in built forms within neighbourhoods and linkages to widen access to open space, that we worked hard together to get approved.

I'm enthusiastic about Belwood Estates in the Fergus-Elora area, where we'll soon be launching sales. This is a wonderful new community of half-acre lots, similar in scale and design to our almost sold out Clarehaven Estates in Claremont, but situated north and west of the GTA in Wellington County. Here we will offer a desirable range of bungalows, bungalofs and two-storey homes in a rural lifestyle with golf and city amenities nearby.