



ON-SITE INSIGHT: TALK ABOUT TEAMWORK



By Hugh Heron, Heathwood Homes

Unless they are involved in the industry, people tend to underestimate the amount of collaborative work that goes into planning, designing and building new home communities.

Builders and developers play major roles, of course, but before we can do anything, municipalities dictate where housing, public amenities and infrastructure should go. Before we begin our planning, they zone areas and determine how many and what types of homes are appropriate for the areas zoned residential. Interestingly, people often assume that the municipalities install roads and sewers on the land designated residential, but in fact, developers do. We have to ensure that the sewer capacity can handle the increased growth and that when we put in the roads, rainwater has a place to drain.

Then it is up to us to create a draft plan that shows where the homes will be situated. Surveyors take this plan and place stakes in the ground for each elevation. The municipality sets out

tolerances, which are typically only a few feet on each side. The homes have to be built in a way that enables water to flow away from them. The need for accuracy is critical.

Now, just think of new home communities with hundreds of residences to build. Every dug foundation requires two to three loads of concrete, and once it is being poured, it has to be completed without stopping. Every day, cement trucks cross the GTA to deliver and pour the concrete, so the amount of coordinating it takes is incredible.

Remember that trades have to work in a specific order for each home, so timing is important. Our onsite supervisors oversee everything to make sure that each step is prepared for, all the while making sure that recycling and clean-up are also accomplished.

So far, the job has taken planners, inspectors, engineers, suppliers, architects, heavy equipment operators, truck drivers and, of course, the construction trades. Builders rely on drywall installers, electricians,

carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, cement workers and painters. All of the above have to keep up with continually changing technology, with new materials and construction techniques advancing all the time.

Electrical, plumbing and other systems in the home have become more complicated, and today we are required to include environmentally friendly elements.

Keep in mind, too, that people can't buy homes if they don't know about them, so our team includes marketing and advertising people, public relations firms, decor consultants, plus sales, service, financial and administration professionals. They all help us take a piece of land, shape it from below the ground up and help shoppers buy our homes.

It's all complicated, labour intensive and challenging. It's also gratifying, and even fun. I love working with a variety of professionals who work toward the goal of building the places people call "home."



Hugh Heron is principal and partner in the Heron Group of Companies, president of Heathwood Homes and chair of The Mikey Network, as well as a former member of the Board of Directors of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and a past president of the Toronto Home Builders' Association and the Ontario Home Builders' Association.

Read more at
Heron.com and Heathwood.com.

