

TURTLE MOUNTAIN FEATURED IN VANCOUVER SUN ARTICLE

July 12, 2008

Vernon BC – Turtle Mountain has been featured in today's Vancouver Sun in a full length article written by journalist Stan Sauerwein.

'Eye appeal' a two-way consideration above Vernon

Turtle Mountain pursues buyers with 4 show homes

Stan Sauerwein

Special to the Sun

Saturday, July 12, 2008

For a developer to worry about the look, from across town, of a new neighborhood is a bit of a twist. One peaked roof on a mountainside looks pretty much like another, right? Not according to Turtle Mountain's developer.

Turtle Mountain, from the Wesbild development company, is serving up soaring views of Vernon and Okanagan Lake. The neighbourhood is literally blocks from the city's downtown amenities. As a key selling feature, the sights from Turtle Mountain are postcard perfect. Proud lot-owners from Alberta are so taken with the trademark scene of mountains and three lakes they've posted video clips of their skyline on YouTube.

When people working in the downtown look up however, Wesbild wants Turtle Mountain to earn the same reaction.

In the third phase, "the homes will be hanging on the cliff and looking right down on the city," Turtle Mountain development manager Tony Zappone says. "We want to make sure the profile and ridge line of houses is eye appealing" to anyone who takes the time to look up --way up.

The conscientious attitude seems to fit the normal operating practice by Wesbild, whose credits include Westwood Plateau in the Lower Mainland and the Predator Ridge resort community, also in Vernon.

The developer has been a generous contributor to a variety of Vernon charities and in March paid to put its name on the Greater Vernon Multiplex as well. Now called Wesbild Centre, the entertainment venue will carry the developer's name for the next five years and maybe longer.

Turtle Mountain boasts trails, wildlife corridors and a low-impact development philosophy that includes geothermal heating and air conditioning, dark sky street lighting and single-loaded streets. It will eventually feature 315 single family homes and 225 multi-family residences.

Zappone says Wesbild is carefully determining architectural guidelines on Phase 3 now and selecting compatible builders. The cliff lots of this new mountainside neighbourhood won't be released until autumn or early 2009, however. In the meantime, the lofty residential neighbour to Vernon's downtown continues to sell view lots in its first two phases at a brisk rate.

A grand opening of four show homes was successfully staged on May 31. Completing that many show homes at once and having them open for viewing from noon to 5 p.m. daily is unique for a city the size of Vernon, says Zappone.



The showcase gives prospective buyers at Turtle Mountain a point of reference architecturally, he adds, as homes in the community must be either in the Craftsman style or in the modern Prairie style that was inspired by the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright. The distinct residences were built in by Inspiration Homes, DyCor Homes, Okanagan Trend West and Trico Homes. To date, 57 of the initial 80 lots released in the development's first two phases have been sold.

"Our key focus at first was infrastructure," says Zappone. "It was a challenge to get this built on the mountainside."

Zappone says Wesbild operates from a holistic point of view when it develops a neighbourhood. "We look at the environment and take the responsibilities of land and water stewardship very seriously," he says.

The company has been recognized by the Audubon Society and the Urban Development Institute for setting the standard for responsible development in sensitive environments.

At Turtle Mountain, Wesbild set aside almost 10 hectares for parkland and incorporated an environmentally sensitive wetland known as habitat for the Painted Turtle. A

Aspen Grove Environmental Reserve, a unique habitat and travel corridor for wildlife moving through the area, was also maintained by Wesbild in the community.

Rare plant and animal species can be observed there including the red-listed trembling aspen. An extensive storm-water management-system has been incorporated at Turtle Mountain. Storm water runoff and snow-melt from the development are collected and filtered through the grove to provide moisture for vegetation.

"Preserving natural ground water flow ensures runoff does not negatively impact the water quality, vegetative community and habitat features," claims Zappone.

High vantage points are afforded in nearly every direction at Turtle Mountain making sight of Okanagan Lake, Swan Lake and Kalamalka Lake splendid rewards after a hike.

The Grey Canal Trail is part of the reconstructed walking and hiking trails system in the development. The canal trail, once part of an elaborate network of open ditches, flumes and pipes used to irrigate agricultural land, features level grades the residents can enjoy.

Turtle Mountain's sales manager, Doug Watson, says buyers are mostly Albertans or Lower Mainland residents.

"But locals who initially purchased in Kelowna are moving here now. Kelowna is just getting too large for them" as a retirement option, he suspects.

Vernon's over-65 population is 50 per cent higher than the provincial average, making price an important factor in housing sales. Prices for the lots in the first two phases at Turtle Mountain range from the low \$200s to \$399,000.

Watson believes interest in the mountainside community is fueled by its location. "We're just 10 minutes from downtown Vernon with its amenities like Wesbild Centre for sporting events and entertainment, the hospital and medical care centres, dining and shopping. People like the fact they are on a mountain with a southern exposure yet Vernon is just seconds away."



Stan Sauerwein is a Kelowna journalist and author of more than a dozen histories and biographies, including Gentleman Train Robber: The Daring Escapades of Bill Miner and Rattenbury: The Life and Tragic End of B.C.'s Greatest Architect.

TURTLE MOUNTAIN

Project location: Vernon

Project size: 315 detached building lots, 225 attached residences

Prices: Phase 1 and 2 building lots, from +\$200,000

Telephone: 1-866-944-0227

Web: turtlemountainvernon.com

Developer: Wesbild Holdings Ltd.

VERNON NAMED AFTER PUBLIC SERVANT

"N. Okanagan . . . in honour of Forbes George Vernon (1843 -- 1911), chief commissioner of lands and works for British Columbia."

- G.P.V. and Helen B. Akrigg, British Columbia Place Names, 1986 and 1997

Where, according to the Transportation Ministry's distance calculator? From Seymour and Hastings, 442 kilometres, 4 hours, 40 minutes, via the Coquihalla highways and Highways 97 and 97C

Where, according to the Forest Ministry's Tree Book? In the bunchgrass biogeoclimatic zone, grasses dominate upland sites because it's too hot in summer for trees to take root.

Where, according to city hall? "Although Vernon enjoys a four seasons climate, it is not unusual to see golfers on the courses in the spring while skiers enjoy the deep powder of nearby mountains."

Daily average temperature, January: -4.2

Coldest January day: -27, Jan. 27, 1972

Daily average temperature, July: 20

Hottest July day: 39, July 20, 1979

Population, 2006 census: 36,000

% change since 2001: +7

Architecturally? Robert Brown Bell (1850 - 1940) enjoyed a 15-year run of commissions before the First World War, "accomplished designs for many grand buildings," reports Building the West: Early Architects of British Columbia (2003).

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