

Beachside living makes water access universal

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Like his dad, Ralph Sletager was born in this north Idaho city on the shores of Lake Pend Oreille.

And like most everyone in this 107-year-old community, water has always been a big part of his life.

"When I was a kid and got done haying, I went to the beach -- and that hasn't changed," says the developer of the 114-hectare Dover Bay, which is about three kilometres west of the city's main drag.

"A kid working (today) at Starbucks can do the same thing. He can bike there to swim or fish."

There are no gates, no membership requirement and no golf course at Dover Bay.

It is a residential development where suits and shorts can co-exist by the lake, sipping a coffee or noshing a sandwich from the mom-and-pop store and restaurant adjacent to the 274-slip marina.

The common thread, whether you own a place at Dover Point -- where bluffside building lots are priced at \$1 million US or more, or rent a beach bungalow for between \$225 and \$400 US -- is the water.

"I wanted this to be an inclusive community, not exclusive," says Sletager from his Lake Street office that looks and feels more like a cabin you might see in Alaska where the developer spent time in the 1970s.

"One of my visions for Dover Bay was to provide access to the water for everyone."

So while Dover Bay has been approved for 535 housing units in 13 neighbourhoods over the next five to seven years, it remains accessible by boat, bike, Birkenstocks or Buick to the townsfolk who just want to hang out. Spotted among the cabins, cottage, apartment condos and mid-to high-end detached homes, Sletager and his design team have added wetlands, two public beaches, four public parks, village centre, emergency services, city hall and more than 14 kilometres of trails that will tie into the city's pathway system.

"We're trying to connect everybody to the water," he adds.

And its this connect with nature, the water, the relaxed atmosphere along with the pricing relative to the exchange rate that is attracting Calgarians and other Southern Alberta buyers to the development, says Marie Garvey, who is involved in the sales and marketing efforts for Dover Bay.

"We have a couple of Calgary buyers, but really we're still getting a feel for the potential market growth there," she says, stopping in front of the Dover Bay post office. "We're relatively close to the border and I think we'll be more active with our marketing efforts in the near future."

Sletager estimates that somewhere between 40 and 45 per cent of Dover Bay sales have gone to Sandpoint and area buyers with the next biggest percentage coming from neighbouring states. About 25 per cent of all buyers are baby boomers and another 15 per cent are younger couples or families.

There is something available for everyone, he adds.

Marina Town apartment condos run from the high \$600,000 range to more than \$1 million while those at Bayside South are under \$400,000. Detached homes in the Cabins in the Woods phase are priced just either side of \$600,000, the Bayside South resort homes are approximately \$900,000 and the Cottages at Dover Meadows run from \$298,500 to \$400,000.

Meanwhile, waterfront lots in Sunset Saddle Estates are priced from \$390,000 to more than \$700,000 while those in Dover Point are about \$1 million. Lots in Reedwalk, Bayside North and Bayside South go from \$145,000 to \$310,000. Still to be developed are Estuary Forest, Riverside and Sandy Beach.

For information, visit www.doverbayidaho.com.

Seasons at Sandpoint

Stretching across about 1,800 sandy feet of Lake Pend Oreille and just a couple of blocks from downtown Sandpoint, this resort offers a selection of apartments or townhouses designed in what is termed Pacific Northwestern architecture with "contemporary Asian" influences to the interior design.

On about four hectares of land on Sandpoint Avenue, Seasons at Sandpoint will be made up of 154 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments measuring slightly more than 1,500 square feet and eight townhouses averaging 4,000 square feet. Prices run from \$400,000 to more than \$2 million.

"Right now, five townhomes, 21 apartments and The Retreat, our three-storey, 11,000-square-foot clubhouse have been completed," says Seasons' sales manager Ed Durkee, following a tour of the project. In addition, construction continues on a residents' marina.

Scheduled to be completed in 2010, home sales are under way in the third phase. Ninety per cent of the first phase has been scooped up with about half of the second sold.

For information, visit www.seasonsatsandpoint.com

The Crossing at Willow Bay

Located 20 minutes by car or 30 minutes by boat from Sandpoint, Idaho, The Crossing at Willow Bay is 72.8 hectares of wilderness living on the shores of the Pend Oreille River.

With fewer than 100 lots, the residences are tucked into the forested lands providing privacy and an escape from big-city living. Add the yacht club with its marina and 244 meters of private waterfront leading to the large Lake Pend Oreille, and it's been a popular spot for those looking for the good life in a quiet, peaceful location.

"This is truly a waterfront community," says Todd Sullivan, who is building homes (well-known Sullivan Homes Idaho is building in Sandpoint and surrounding area) in the community that is being developed by his father, Jim, and brother, Brett, under CDI Development. "We have a yacht club, but it's low key and not as formal as what you'd think of in a yacht club. Here, it's very laid back."

Buyers are families who want to enjoy the experience of life on the water, he says.

"We'll have a beach club for the kids with activities, our own 'fleet' of boats, such as kayaks, for rent, and a boat 'concierge,' who will bring your boat to you."

The yacht club features a full kitchen and huge deck overlooking the river, a library and business centre, and fitness centre with locker rooms, as well as the children's activity and media room.

Lots in the development are priced from \$259,000 US to \$885,000 US, depending on size and location, and range from 0.6 to 1.2 hectares. Sullivan Homes is building now in the community, and custom homes are available as well.

"Nobody buys dirt," says Sullivan. "We're giving them a lifestyle dream."

Sullivan Homes has "a grand lodge mountain look that is not really rustic and rough, but more refined and more urban," he says.

The homes already built and for sale include an 1,806-square-foot two-master-bedroom home with a waterfront view, a boat slip, and optional furniture package, for US\$975,000.

For information, visit www.CrossingWillowBay.com.

Trappers Creek at Schweitzer Mountain

If you're more a snow kind of person, rather than a fair-weather fiend, you'll be interested in this development by Schweitzer Land and Timber Company on the mountain that's a haven for skiers.

Trappers Creek features 35 ski-in, ski-out properties just a short drive from Sandpoint. The development will have 65 units in total in either single-family, duplex, or tri-plex sites of full ownership.

Single-family lots are in the \$400,000 range, duplexes from \$600,000 US, and tri-plexes from \$900,000 US.

The developer has a list of specific builders, or buyers can bring in their own builders, subject to architectural guidelines which include such things as heated driveways and the use of natural material on the exteriors. The average size of the single- and duplex homes will be in the range of 2,000 square feet.

The development is above the ski village site, which will also expand in the near future to give people more restaurants and amenities as well as some live-work units.

Eight hundred units are already built on the mountain, which will have as many as 4,000 housing units by completion.

The mountain has more than 1,173.6 hectares of slopes with 20 per cent beginner, 40 per cent intermediate, 40 per cent expert runs, and 10 lifts. Another 809.4 hectares of cat skiing are on the back side of the mountain.

Nestled in the Selkirk Mountains, Schweitzer Mountain Resort was rated in the top 25 ski resorts in North America by Skiing Magazine readers last year. Schweitzer averages 762 centimeters of snow per season.

For more information, visit www.schweitzerland.com.

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