

Dharma Developments

Leading the way in residential green building



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Everything that is new or uncommon raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

Akash Sinha, a civil engineer and the hip young owner of Dharma Developments (www.DharmaDevelopments.com), is stirring up interest in green building – introducing to the Ottawa marketplace residential communities that look and feel “new” and inspired – simply by embracing the challenge to build green.

Dharma Developments is a small company that has made a big commitment – to itself, its community and homeowners, and the environment that supports them all.

Philosophically, a willingness to employ new methods and new innovations in the creation of environmentally aware and sustainable communities is what makes Dharma different. On the construction site, impeccable workmanship, attention to details, and a commitment to the environment are the foundation upon which each Dharma project comes to life.

“I want to put forth my own vision of what I believe residential development can become, with sound construction practices, environmental leadership, great design and attention to aesthetics,” says Sinha.

The unique energy and enthusiasm of the Dharma team has certainly contributed to the success of its first project, Powers Enclave, and has created an undeniable buzz in anticipation of the Grand Opening of Orville Sta-



tion – both located in the enviable west Ottawa neighbourhood of Stittsville.

Sinha recognizes that, “For a new construction company, we took on a pretty hefty-sized project for the first time with Powers Enclave. Although traditional in some respects, we still managed to incorporate some green features others didn’t have at the time, like dual-flush toilets and fibre cement siding rather than petroleum-based products like vinyl.” Even these two choices in materials and fixtures will enhance each home’s property value for years to come.

Only three of the 29 homes in Powers En-

clave remain to be sold. Construction of this development began in 2006 and will wrap up this summer with the completion of the landscaping.

Among the vital lessons learned by Dharma during the Powers Enclave project was the importance of having a strong partnership with the trades and clear and simple systems on site. Dharma developed strong working relationships with trades people who value, as they do, quality workmanship and integrity. “We hold ourselves accountable and we expect the same from the people who work with us,” explains Sinha. Dharma now is in a position to put together best management practices for upcoming new projects.

Among the first builders in Ottawa to offer Energy Star homes in tract housing as opposed to custom built, Dharma has now positioned itself on the cutting edge of residential development. Until now, the internationally recognized LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the Canada Green Building Council (www.cagbc.org) was available only to commercial projects. Orville Station is Ottawa’s first Silver LEED for Homes pilot community.

“With Orville Station, our goal is to show that you can have LEED quality and still be affordable,” says Sinha. Construction of these exquisite lofts and two bedroom condos will begin as early as this fall with the Grand Opening Party at the Orville Station Sales Centre on April 5 at 1535 Stittsville Main Street. The Orville Station condos range in size from 735 square feet to 1,229

square feet, starting from the low \$170,000s. Early bird buyers can expect bonuses.

A central courtyard entrance with a foot bridge to the residence doors, landscaping with native plant species, and paving stones instead of asphalt are a few of the community’s unique features. Inside the suites, the use of low-volatile organic compound (VOC) paints and resins, heat recovery ventilators, cabinetry and floors from certified farmed forests or recycled materials, and energy-efficient heating systems are in the plans for the trio of low-rise buildings.

Excess lumber is the biggest contributor of construction waste, and an issue the homebuilding industry has had trouble getting under control. Instead of traditional wood framing, the Orville Station condos are being framed with Structural Insulated Panels (SIP). Not only do they provide superior insulation because they offer a more solid membrane, they are a pre-fab material which speeds up construction.

LEED looks at construction on a holistic level, advancing green building practices in the construction industry by the implementation of a green building rating system. LEED certification requires a project to submit detailed documentation of performance standards, which are then reviewed before being recognized.

The Council’s goal is to have 100,000 buildings and one-million homes certified by 2015 with a 50 per cent reduction in energy and water use, and 50 megatonnes of GHG emission reductions.

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As a company, Dharma Developments has a strong focus on community support. They believe in being active in the community and they project that sense of community in how they build and in who they support.

Since 2005 Dharma Developments has raised over \$50,000 through their annual charitable fundraising party and donated it to organizations that help prevent homeless-

ness in Ottawa. "Building Dreams and Hope for Low Income Families" has become this year's fundraising mantra. And certainly no one could accuse them of not *walking the talk*. "As home builders we believe that decent, safe, affordable housing should be available to everyone," says Sinha.

This year, Dharma has partnered with Habitat for Humanity National Capital Region to host their fourth annual fundraising party, aptly titled *Urbana*. It will take place on April 24th, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the National Archives. Call 613-482-2800 for tickets/details or order online at www.DharmaDevelopments.com/urbana.



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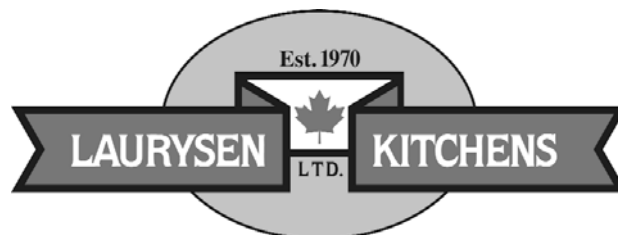
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