

NEW HOMES

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EDITOR: BARB LIVINGSTONE 235-7339

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SECOND IN CANADA

Resale prices keep soaring within Alberta.

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GST CUT EXPLAINED

What new home buyers need to know before Jan. 1.

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David Crawford

SHOW HOME OF THE WEEK

Makeover creates elegant spaces.

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Town to double

MARTY HOPE
CALGARY HERALD
TURNER VALLEY

At one million people, Calgary has become way too big for some folks, so they've started to relocate to satellite communities.

Inevitably, these smaller communities like Airdrie, Cochrane and Okotoks grow up as people try to escape the bright lights and other negative influences of the big city.

But for some, these places are also beginning to lose the look and feel that drew them there.

So, the search for that elusive small-town atmosphere has a growing number of people drifting west towards the foothills.

Along Highway 22, the first place they hit is Turner Valley, the birthplace of Alberta's oil industry.

There is a town that's getting serious about reinventing itself as urbanites and folks from neighbouring towns begin to consider settling here.

And developers are getting ready for them.

It's just past high noon and the lunch-time crowd is moving into the Coyote Moon Cafe on Main Street for a sandwich and coffee.

At one table sits Ken Till and Thomas England, partners in a couple of residential developments in the town.

Turner Valley ready to reinvent itself as projects are launched

Across the way sit the newly-elected mayor, Dona Fluter, along with deputy mayor and councillor Barry Williamson, and chief administrative officer Stan Ogrodniczuk.

The people at these two tables are key members of the hitch that will help steer this town of 2,100 along the trail of controlled growth.

"It's the quality of life here that we want to sell," says Ogrodniczuk during an earlier meeting in the municipal building. "We get about 14,000 vehicle trips per day through and we want to capture some of that."

Fluter and Williamson are the only holdovers from the previous council.

Along with five newcomers, they have been charged with the responsibility of further developing a new look for the town — a vision that will be a blend of new residential neighbourhoods and the revitalization of a tired looking Main Street.

The town owns about four hectares of property on the street that will be part of that proposed revitalization program.

But, Turner Valley's main drag won't have the big box retailers that have invaded other towns, says Williamson.

There will be boutique stores and businesses offering a variety of goods and services to residents and tourists.

"Almost every single piece of available land is being developed," says Fluter. "We have six residential projects on the go within the town's boundaries, and we could be looking at between 1,000 and 1,200 units by the end of next year."

Coupled with this ongoing development, the town also has to deal with its aging infrastructure and plans to add to it to allow for growth; finalize plans for new economic development; design and construct a reservoir to provide an additional source of water; the design of a marketing campaign around the preservation of the Turner Valley Gas Plant as a national historic site; and, in general, do a whole lot to spruce up the town.

It was in Turner Valley 93 years ago that the Dingman gas well blew to the surface, causing a flurry of investment speculation and forever changing Alberta's economic future.

A decade later, the Royalite No. 4 well blew and ran wild for weeks before being brought under control.

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HOME SHORTS

Prices set to climb

The housing story for Calgary next year is one of ups and downs, says a federal agency.

Sales of new and resale homes are to decline in 2008, but the average price is to continue to climb, says Lai Sing Louie of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

Prices are to rise to \$550,000, an increase of \$75,000. On the resale side, prices are to climb to \$450,000, an increase of \$32,000.

— Marty Hope

Time to get efficient

Here are some energy efficiency tips, courtesy of a federal agency. Draftproof everywhere, including foundation walls, attic hatches and doors, around window and door frames, at ceiling penetrations, and around light fixtures and wiring, says Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. Consider upgrading to more energy-efficient windows to prevent heat loss, greatly improving comfort levels and reducing maintenance needs. You should also consider upgrading your furnace or boiler to a new high-efficiency unit.

For more tips, call CMHC at 1-800-668-2642 or visit www.cmhc.ca.

— Staff

Freeze means hurry up

The residential construction crews must have heard the recent forecast of chilly weather for Calgary.

It didn't much matter where you looked, workers — particularly roofers — were hustling trying to get as many homes as possible shingled so that construction schedules wouldn't take a beating. The same goes for stucco and vinyl siding trades. It's going to be cool this weekend, if you can believe the weather folks on radio and TV, but trades are a hardy bunch. Problem is, if it gets to cold, some of their equipment gets difficult to operate.

— Marty Hope

THIS WEEK'S
MORTGAGE
RATE: 7.2%



Base rate for a one-year closed mortgage, as reported by the Bank of Canada. Lending institutions may set their own rates. Arrow indicates an increase.



FROM II

TOWN: History honoured

In 1936, crude oil was discovered, with production peaking in 1942 with the production of more than 10 million barrels of oil, which was used to assist Allied efforts during the Second World War.

Part of the present-day plans to reinvigorate the town run parallel to ideas to celebrate the centennial of the Dingman discovery.

Companies owned by Till and England — Everwood Estates Ltd. and Seclusion Valley Developments Ltd. — are a part of those plans because they are progressing with two sizeable neighbourhoods in the town.

"To do something like we are, you must be committed to the town and work with them to help them achieve their vision," says Till.

Everwood, which has 63 single-family lots and a large multi-family site, is well underway.

Four local builders — Woodmaster Homes, Stagecoach Homes, Southview Homes, Homes by Bellia — are in charge of the single-family portion, while Kim-Corp has purchased the land from Till and England for the 36-unit multi-family portion that will have

36 townhouses.

The first phase of Seclusion Valley Estates has 68 single-family lots and will have lot-and-house prices ranging from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million.

In the month it has been on the market, one sale has been recorded.

Builders in this phase are Timber-Creek Homes, a division of Coco Homes, Elite Homes of Calgary, and Woodmaster Homes. No final approval has been received for future phases.

"With about 1,200 people expected to live in Everwood and another 500 to 600 likely in Seclusion Valley, we'll almost double the town's population when we're built out," says England. Town officials predict the population will climb to about 4,500 in the next five years.

"It's Turner Valley's turn," says England. "Other smaller towns like Strathmore, Cochrane and High River are experiencing growth

and it's beginning to trickle this way." Till, who has purchased a lot in Everwood to build

IN SHORT

Turner Valley.

LOCATION: 65 kilometres southwest of Calgary at the junction of Highways 22 and 7.

POPULATION: About 2,100, say municipal officials, with 4,500 expected in five

years.

DEVELOPMENTS: Two of the largest projects are Seclusion Valley Estates, which has phase one approval for 68 high-end, single-family homes, and Everwood, which will be a mix of single- and multi-family. Both developments are by companies operated by Ken Till and Thomas England.

OUTLOOK: Town officials are eyeing plans to improve infrastructure, redevelop the downtown, provide housing at various prices, and to improve tourism opportunities — which will include the Turner Valley Gas Plant, which has been designated a national historic site.



Photos, Marty Hope, Calgary Herald

From left, Turner Valley deputy mayor Barry Williamson, Mayor Dona Fluter and chief administrative officer Stan Ogrodniczuk. Completion of work on Highway 22 is expected to help boost the town.

himself a new home, says interest in the partnership's two projects has been strong from people in Okotoks and Calgary, estimating that between 30 and 40 per cent of visits to the Main Street presentation centre have been from those two centres.

Fluter says the ongoing developments will also provide housing options for locals looking to move up in the housing market.

"I see real potential for this town because of the Deerfoot Trail extension and the completion of work on Highway 22, and when the ring road in Calgary is finished, that will make access to the west and northwest areas a lot easier for commuters," says Till.

"Then, you have the blue sky and snow-covered mountains right out the window. You can't beat it." The town's deputy mayor says it's time for Turner Valley to "think beyond its historical boundaries" and to begin preparing for an influx of people looking for a lifestyle change.

"The growth potential is unlimited and as Calgary grows, we have to be ready to grow in tandem," says Williamson.

Because of concerns regarding water licences and infrastructure limitations, the town put a moratorium in 2004 on development.

But 18 months later, it was lifted when the decision was made to construct the reservoir.

One of the big-city concerns that has found its way to Turner Valley is



Turner Valley's growth potential is being seen as 'unlimited.'

the need and shortage of affordable housing.

To this end, Till and England are building a 45-unit stacked townhouse complex with between 600 and 1,200 square feet of living space.

Located a couple of blocks off Main Street on the north edge of town, the units could be ready for single people and families in 12 months, says Till.

"Turner Valley is no different than other towns," says Fluter. "It needs affordable housing so young people have something to live in, instead of moving to other places."

The town, three kilometres down

the Friendship Trail from Black Diamond, knows full well it's time to step up its plans for future growth and development. But with a part-time council, it's a difficult situation.

"Managing growth is a huge challenge for us as a part-time council," says Fluter. "As well as dealing with that, we have the added pressures of dealing with infrastructure, environmental issues tied to development, ensuring green space is preserved, enhancing our tourism efforts — all of this at a time when development is beginning to pick up speed."



Thomas England of Seclusion Valley Development Ltd. on the site.