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Living green in retirement

by David Field

Seniors who make environmentally conscious purchases every day are now able to evaluate retirement communities in the same way before selecting a residence to live in. In the past few years more companies have been designing greener retirement residences in Canada allowing residents to live in a green way and to enjoy the health and programming benefits that result.

At Delmanor Northtown in Toronto, Ontario, the building follows the green rating system established by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Residents suites feature low flow shower heads and faucets, dual flush toilets, Energy Star Appliances, front-load washing machines, and low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) carpets and paints.

Similar features are also available in the suites of residents at Origin Evergreen in Mississauga, Ontario and Origin at Longwood in Nanaimo, British Columbia. But most seniors will spend much time using the extensive amenities available in their retirement community, so these areas are also designed with a green focus. At Origin at Longwood, the residence was built into the forest and designed as a low-rise building to fit with that environment. At Origin Evergreen, there are over 10,000 plants in the common areas, community gardens (food that makes its way to the chef) and a green roof that reduces water run off prevents the building from contributing to the warming of the atmosphere.

For both Delmanor and Origin being green has been built into their corporate identity. Employees (and even residents) are encouraged to ride bikes, carpool and at Origin use lower emission buses for moving residents around outside the retirement residence. These green philosophies also have a huge payoff. According to energy audits, Origin Evergreen will prevent 165 tonnes of CO_2 emissions from entering the atmosphere and save $40,000 in energy costs annually.

There are also added health benefits for residents, "These are environments that are more friendly to live in," says Mike Brcko, the director of business infrastructure at Origin Active Lifestyle Communities. "Residents will have more sunlight, better air quality and windows that are able to open."

For those seniors who want to do what they can to live in an green way, there are retirement communities that share the same desires. Every time a resident at Delmanor Northtown or the newly built Delmanor Wynford brings their household garbage to their floor's tri-sorter, they will know that their compost, recycling and normal waste are having a reduced impact on the environment.

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