

# NEWHOMES

## Here's hoping model homes won't disappear



MARTIN SLOFSTRA  
EDITOR'S  
NOTE

I've mentioned in past columns that it is now possible to bypass the traditional home buying process and purchase a new home without ever visiting a sales office or touring a model home.

In fact, it's happening more and more, usually at sites in Markham or Oakville, or at places within a commuter's drive from Toronto.

And so, it's not nearly as often that I get invited to see a model home anymore — the trend clearly is to move away from building them and have people buy from plans.

So, earlier this week, I made the trip to Dundalk, Ont. to visit Flato's new model home in this community called Edgewood Greens.

Builders, of course, do their best to portray places like Dundalk — a quaint and quiet community that is a relatively easy drive north of Bramp-

ton — in the most positive light. And it does feel like an entire world away.

I had previously visited the site in July when it was literally a wide open field. It was fascinating to see the roads being built and the foundations starting to be poured.

Now, even on this cold, blustery January day (— 12 C and that's before the wind chill), it was amazing to how far the site has come, an entire new community that is quickly coming to life.

As for the model home where the finishing touches are now being applied, it's looking very comfortable and nice. (Look for profiles of this new model home and others in upcoming issues.)

Safe to say, and while you do wonder who is moving here, a beautifully decorated model home at a reasonable price just might get you to think that living up here could be okay.

And, in the Toronto market, where 90 per cent of all new homes sold are condos, if you're looking for owning a fully-detached home with



The newly decorated model home in Flato Development's Edgewood Greens site in Dundalk, Ont. is just about to open.

a nice yard and backing on a greenbelt, this may be the only option.

After my visit and giving it more thought, I am now hoping the model home experience will never be replaced. Same thing for the feeling you get when driving around a new home site and imagining what a new community will look like.

For all the hype around new technologies and the virtual home buying experience, there is no substitute to seeing it for real.



Vivo Resorts in Puerto Escondido, Mexico sits alone on a tranquil beach with amazing view of the mountains ocean.

## Authentic Mexico condo is a hidden gem



NATALIE DEANE  
GOOD  
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This cold, cold winter has me thinking about a wonderful trip I took to Mexico in the fall.

Not your Tijuana, Cancun, Cabo tequila partying vacation — well there was a little of that — but there was a lot more true Mexican authenticity. Fantastic southern Mexican food, eco-tours, dancing in the streets with the locals for Dia de Muertos, surfing the waves on gorgeous beaches, historical sites and the warm welcome of the Mexican people.

Puerto Escondido is a charming port town on Mexico's Pacific coast in the state of Oaxaca. From surfing the famous Mexican Pipeline, and boogie boarding on the ocean, to deep sea fishing or exploring the vast species of birds and animals on the lagoon, to horseback trail rides up to waterfalls, natural wonders are all around.

You can spend your day shopping in the bustling local market where you can see Mexican mole made fresh daily as well as daytrips to coffee and Mezcal plantations there is so much to see and do.

Puerto Escondido is a delight if like me you enjoy a destination untouched by large scale development, it's pristine and unspoiled!

Located on the stunning white sands of Playa Palmarito Beach just a 20-minute drive from Puerto Escondido's town centre — just far enough away to give you the idyllic serenity of paradise, is Vivo Resorts.

Founded by two-time Canadian Olympian downhill skier Cary Mullen, Vivo Resorts is an ocean-front development, and exclusive gated community

with luxury condos and private villas.

There has been no expense spared in building these decadent condos that come fully equipped with modern kitchens fitted with deluxe appliances, stocked with all the house wares one could need, along with comfortable and stylish furnishings, every unit has a large terrace or balcony that offers spectacular ocean views.

The villas are the home everyone dreams of on the beach with rooftop lanais that take advantage of the ocean breezes. The best part of all of this is that you can purchase these as holiday homes, a family escape, retirement paradise or long term investment.

A waterfront condominium at Vivo Resorts comes in at an average of \$469,000 for a two-bedroom, two-bathroom unit with one bedroom suites in the newest tower starting at \$327,400.

This includes all furnishings, a 50 inch TV, ensuite laundry, maid service and of course use of all the resort amenities including the infinity and kids pools, a state of the art gym, meeting rooms, a gorgeous rooftop event space, a restaurant with exquisite gourmet meals (believe me I tried everything on the menu) as well as a sports bar.

Vivo Resorts sits alone on a tranquil beach with amazing views of the mountains and ocean. Every morning I would wander down to a beach chair to take in the sunshine, the waves and sometimes the sight of dolphins or a whale in the distance. This for me is Mexico's hidden gem.

Want to explore and experience this little piece of heaven? Visit [www.vivoresorts.com](http://www.vivoresorts.com).

— *Natalie Deane is a lifestyle connoisseur who writes about trends in home, decor, entertainment and travel.*

## Renovate successfully with the right building permits



DAVE WILKES  
BILD

Home renovations can increase the value and enjoyment of your home. At BILD, we have resources you can use to make your next renovation a success. Start by contacting a professional renovator to help you with building permits.

Building permits are permissions issued by municipalities for the construction, demolition or alteration of homes.

While each municipality has its own regulations, most major renovations, such as those that alter structural walls or plumbing, require building permits.

Obtaining a building permit can take several weeks or even months. In some municipalities, like Toronto, permits can take up to 46 weeks to be approved, which means homeowners might have to wait close to a year to begin a renovation project.

Because of these roadblocks, some homeowners may be discouraged from renovating and others may begin projects without building permits. Fines for pursuing a project without a permit range from \$200

to \$27,000. Professional renovators can help homeowners navigate this process and ensure they have the right building permits.

With the best interests of the renovation industry and consumers in mind, BILD is always communicating with municipal governments to speed up the building permits process.

We have asked municipalities to handle applications concurrently, introduce a separate stream for renovations for Committee of Adjustment applications (a committee made up of citizen members who hold public hearings on applications for minor variances, permissions and consents) and clearly define service standards.

If you're looking for a general renovation contractor, we encourage you to choose a RenoMark™ renovator. You can have confidence in RenoMark™ renovators as they must abide by a Code of Conduct which requires them to have written contracts for all jobs, a minimum of \$2 million in liability insurance and a two-year warranty on all work.

A RenoMark™ renovator can assess your project and can help you identify and obtain the right building permits. Some renovations might require the help of other service professionals, such as architects, and a

professional renovator can coordinate with them for you.

Acting as your project manager, the professional renovator can bring in the right people, get the necessary drawings and submit a building permit application on your behalf.

Find your RenoMark™ professional renovator at [www.renomark.ca](http://www.renomark.ca). The website features a searchable database of professional renovators, trade contractors and custom builders. If you're a renovator in the GTA looking to get involved with RenoMark™, email [membership@bildgta.ca](mailto:membership@bildgta.ca).

My columns over the next few months will provide information on identifying your renovation project needs, choosing a renovator and understanding what happens if your project needs a variance to an existing municipal bylaw.

To learn more about renovating with confidence, visit the Destination Renovation exhibit at the GTA Home and Reno show, February 16-19.

— *Dave Wilkes is President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), the voice of the home building, land development and professional renovation industry in the GTA. Follow BILD on Twitter, @bildgta, or visit [www.bildgta.ca](http://www.bildgta.ca).*