



By Brock Weir

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The family-run company has built a strong reputation building residences across Ontario from the ground-up, but here in Aurora, they are doing something different: they are creating communities within communities for local seniors.

Over the past two years, Fieldgate Retirement Living has been focused on transforming Kingsway Place, located on Murray Drive, just west of Yonge Street, from a two-storey residence into a multi-storey, state-of-the-art community that seniors can call home – and it's a success story told not only within its walls, but around the wider community as well.

"When we came into Kingsway Place, it had great staff, people were very happy with the property, but it needed a facelift, as any property does," says Ray Barlow, Director of Operations, Fieldgate Retirement Living.

The first task, he said, was making sure the "facelift" would result in a residence that meets the ever-evolving needs of seniors looking for a new lifestyle.



It was much more than just a 70-room "facelift" with wireless call bells and completely redesigned bathrooms with all the latest safety and accessibility features in each suite, but a complete re-think of what a seniors community needs.

The renovation was designed for a seamless transition between the two phases of construction, and intended to have everything a senior might need – from top flight dining experiences in the new dining room with our brand new kitchen to an advanced care program, which allows residents to have face to face communication with a doctor via an on-screen terminal, resulting in faster care and avoiding trips to busy waiting rooms.

Renovations have also included the renovation and addition of an impressive suite of amenities, including an in-house cinema featuring art from classic Hollywood films, a craft kitchen, piano lounge, Billiard room and, at the heart of Kingsway, its Bistro and patio deck, which has become the social gathering area of the building.

The bold transformation was finished in June of 2019 and Kingsway Place has heard nothing but praise for the finished product.

"Fieldgate has a very strong reputation for quality and service, and they took on this project with that philosophy behind them," says Mr. Barlow, noting the company's additional projects in Whitby, Milton and Burlington.



nearby parks and green spaces in a very pedestrian-friendly community, away from much of the hustle and bustle of Yonge Street.

The residence overlooks ample parkland while, on site, the property offers a number of opportunities for residents to take in nature and fresh air, whether relaxing in gardens located on the ground level, or kicking back on an expertly appointed balcony patio for a barbecue, to get some sun, or enjoy a glass of wine with their neighbours.

The word on what Kingsway Place offers is quickly spreading and there has been significant interest from people in the surrounding neighbourhood – individuals who are not residents of Kingsway Place – in taking advantage of some of their programs and services.

Live entertainment, such as a recent visit from a Toronto-based banjo band, was a big draw, as was a recent theatre trip to Penetanguishene.

"We get a lot of buy-in from the community," says Mr. Barlow. "People are dropping into Kingsway Place and we have created an environment where people can come and just check out our events and be very comfortable here. It is a community within a community."

Looking ahead over the next twelve months, both Mr. Barlow and Ms. Bennett see nothing but opportunities to grow and evolve. They hope to expand tours and other events to keep strengthening their community bonds, including the start of a neighbourhood walking club and spearheading a speakers' series on senior health and wellness.

"Our next year is really focused on the resident experience in this building," says Mr. Barlow. "There are a tremendous number of things that provide advantages for seniors and we have made some great connections, including ease of access to Care with our own on-site telemedicine terminal allowing our residents to connect with their physician and specialist without having to leave our community. We're continuing to branch out within the Aurora community and look at ways to better improve the experience for everyone."

Retirement Living

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That, at the end of the day, is what it's all about, says Ms. Bennett.

"It's seeing the difference you're making in somebody's life," she says. "It is a family coming in distress because mom isn't managing well and you work with those families, support them, and they see the difference when mom is here now. It gives me satisfaction because I am helping families, informing them, and, when you see the results, it is gratifying."



Mr. Barlow agrees:

"There is nothing better than working with a group of people who continuously strive to make people happy."

"We spent a lot of time looking at the retirement sector for things that could be done better and I think Kingsway Place is a very good start of showing that commitment by the company. Our company is very committed to providing a place that people can call home."

Residents who already called Kingsway Place home prior to the renovation have also been impressed, according to Valerie Bennett, Director of Community Relations for Kingsway Place, noting that they "love the small little touches."

Beyond those "small little touches," however, is a wider picture, one that places Kingsway Place in the heart of a bucolic corner of Aurora.

"Serenity" is a watchword for many residents, says Mr. Barlow, and they enjoy being able to go out for a stroll through