



the star.com

Amenities go beyond cards and bingo

February 09, 2008

Bingo and cards are just the beginning for seniors in today's modern retirement residences, which have upped the level of services to those of some posh resorts.

Think theatre, indoor pool with sauna and steam room, yoga and cappuccino bars. It's all part of the trend toward aging in place, which provides amenities to help people live full lives in their own homes.

"Our home is very luxurious with the idea that people are coming straight from their homes," says Karen Spear, executive director of Thorne Mill on Steeles. The Thornhill residence, on Steeles Ave. W., east of Bathurst, is one of about 450 Sunrise Communities worldwide in the U.S.-based company.

"We have a spa exclusively for seniors, a Lincoln town car that can be reserved, and concierge services just like a hotel that can be used to book tickets or arrange for dry cleaning. There's also a theatre, arts studio, indoor pool, piano bar, library and billiards room. We make it easy for residents to connect."

All of this is included in the monthly rents, which vary from \$3,500 to \$5,500 per person, per month. There are 230 units – 180 of which are independent living suites with full apartments with kitchens and bathrooms, ranging from 406 to 1,019 square feet.

The same level of amenities will be found at the 670-unit Harmony Village on Sheppard Ave. just west of Warden, where a 55,000-square-foot community centre will be designed solely to meet active seniors' needs. It will include a health club and spa, a physiotherapy clinic, an entire floor of medical offices, and will run more than 100 programs.

"If you create a village environment, you end up having more social activities, says Jack Pong, president of Harmony Village.

"There will be one care co-ordinator for every 150 residences, who will be like a concierge, arranging for services. We'll also have a one-quarter mile interior walking path with a street-scaped interior. There will be retail, cappuccino bars, games rooms and a health club."

What will make the Harmony Village different from other retirement care developments is its non-profit status.

The residence will be integrated with St. Paul's Community centre. Volunteers will run the programs included in the community centre. Many services will be free; others will be charged on a per usage basis.

Pong says there are 390 people on a waiting list who have expressed interest in Harmony

Village and he expects to go to market in March. No construction date has been set. The units are for purchase and range from \$149,000 to \$600,000 for 500 to 1,800 square feet for one and two bedrooms with or without dens. Monthly maintenance fees are about 55 cents per square foot.

Shelly Sanders Greer