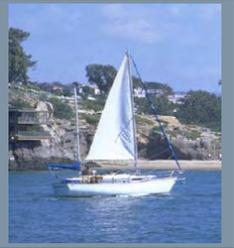


# Lakeview Port Stanley

*A carefree lifestyle close to the water's edge*



Gail Crook's kitchen features maple cabinetry, sage green counters and soft taupe walls.

Gail Crook had been looking for a lakeside cottage for several years before realizing her hectic work schedule didn't lend itself well to maintaining a second home.

Last Christmas, one of her sons suggested she look at the condos in the Domus Developments community of Lakeview Port Stanley. It's located on Lake Erie's north shore southwest of London, Ont.

"I came down and looked and fell in love with it," Crook, 53, says of the 24-unit development. "The condos are beautiful and nicely laid out, and it's only two minutes from the beach."

Crook, who moved into her four-bedroom condo last May, was no stranger to condo living. She had lived in a condo in downtown London and in Toronto's Harbour Square overlooking Lake Ontario.

"I got the bug then that I wanted to be close to the water," she recalls.

Crook spends most weekends at her condo and plans to retire there. She says her neighbours are friendly and tend to look out for one another. Many, like herself, have hectic jobs and were looking for a relaxing beach getaway.

"This is very much a small-town cottage atmosphere," Crook says. "When I come here, it's like a different world."

Crook entertains family and friends on weekends and buys her fresh produce at roadside stands and her staples at a nearby grocery store. Her condo is located within easy walking distance of Port Stanley's main street with its collection of boutiques and restaurants.

Because her work life is so busy, Crook finds it somewhat disorienting migrating between two such radically different lifestyles. Her home in Toronto is a one-bedroom apartment at Yonge and Eglinton streets.

"I feel like Jekyll and Hyde now coming here, but I think I needed it," she says.

Crook's condo is situated at the rear of the community, which combines architectural elements from Prince Edward Island, North Carolina and Cape Cod. With their pale yellow concrete siding, white trim and recessed balconies, the attached units have a light, beachfront appearance. Dormer windows at the back of the condos accentuate the Cape Cod feeling.

A generous porch at the front of Crook's unit opens in to a bright, two-storey foyer. To the left are a large kitchen and dinette with taupe-coloured ceramic tile floors, maple cabinets with deep crown mouldings, sage green laminate counters and soft taupe walls. Bright splashes of colour from French pottery give the kitchen a distinctly European flavour.

A hallway leads past a powder room to a spacious great room, which features a partially vaulted ceiling, pale laminate floors and a gas fireplace. Off the great room, a spacious master bedroom incorporates a beautiful ensuite bathroom, as well as a roomy walk-in closet.

A staircase leads to the second floor where a balcony provides a vantage point over the great room. On the opposite side of the balcony, a round porthole-style window offers a glimpse of the swimming pool at the front of Crook's unit. A full bathroom, a laundry/furnace room and three bedrooms complete the second floor.

The last block of four units in the \$4-million development is currently under construction. The average price for the 2,000-square-foot condos is \$220,000 and includes laminate flooring on the first floor; maple cabinetry; rounded corners on interior walls; radiant in-floor heat on the main level; whirlpool bathtubs; an open-concept second-floor office; a gas fireplace, and central air conditioning. All of the units include front porches and many have balconies.

Dominic Mescia, president of Domus Developments, says buyers are mainly from Southwestern Ontario and many have a long-standing connection to Port Stanley. The maintenance-free exteriors are particularly appealing to owners who come for the weekend, although most are full-time residents.

Mescia, who worked with London designers Lori Ireland, Bryan Moore and Radu Ciobanu on the design of the condos, won an award in 2001 from the Ontario Home Builders' Association for the most outstanding multi-unit home. He has also won two design awards from the London Home Builders' Association.

Crook says she's she delighted with her condo - and the opportunity to split her time between the city and the lake.

"I think that for people who are going to retire, this is the life. I like this because I'll have a little garden at the back, so you have the best of both worlds," she observes. "You have to spend time enjoying yourself, instead of always maintaining the house."