

dream BIG

STORY TRACEY TONG



PHOTO: JESSICA DEEKS

Noel Perera's real estate development projects number in the hundreds in more than 40 countries. They run the gamut from custom homes, to a royal palace and a waste management facility in the Caribbean that is being used by the World Bank as a model for sustainable development and environmental stewardship. He's worked at every military base in Canada and in the Arctic every summer. So what does a man with Noel's extensive portfolio and vision do next? Dream bigger.

Located a 15 minute drive from downtown Ottawa, Onassa Springs is close to shopping, healthcare and the Cedarhill Golf and Country Club, to which a one-year membership is included with home purchase.



"I like to imagine things and make them come to life," says Noel, who is building **Onassa Springs**, Ottawa's first luxury gated community. The project is 16 years in the making and he estimates that in the next three, his dream of making Onassa Springs the region's most prestigious place to live will become a reality.

Located in southwest Ottawa on Cedarview Road south of Hunt Club West near the Cedarhill Golf and Country Club (which he also owns), Onassa Springs touts exclusive country estate living in the middle of the city.

The community is just 15 minutes from downtown, four minutes to the Bayshore Shopping Centre and the Queensway Carleton Hospital, and two minutes from Highway 416.

The son of a Sri Lankan diplomat and businessman, Noel was raised in Thailand and England and grew up travelling. Although he's visited 75 countries, the married father of three eventually chose to settle in Ottawa.

"It's the best place in Canada to live and raise a family," says Noel, who studied electrical engineering and applied mathematics at the University of New Brunswick. "It is a small city and traffic is manageable. It has everything a big city in Canada has. It's safe and friendly. Ottawa has a stable real estate market and a stable economy. It is the best capital of the G8 countries to live in."

Many of the larger cities in Canada and the U.S. have gated communities, says Noel, "but for whatever reason, Ottawa still does not have one." What it does have is a population with the highest median income and education in the country, which is what leads him to believe that there is a demand for such a community.

With restricted covenants and controls

on the development, there will be no other subdivisions in the capital like Onassa Springs once it is substantially developed. The Rockcliffe Park and Westboro areas have expensive homes, but Noel says there's a mix of housing and there are very limited or no controls on the size of the houses.

Most of the homes in Onassa Springs will exceed 4,000 square feet and boast a minimum three-car garage. The community will be fully serviced with its own snowplowing, landscaping, private security and maintenance. The subdivision also features a clubhouse, an indoor swimming pool, an outdoor pool with a swim-up bar, hot tubs, Canada's best spa facility, an indoor virtual golf course and a fine-dining restaurant. Purchase of a home includes a one-year membership to the Cedarhill Golf and Country Club.

These privileges won't come cheaply, but he believes that people will be willing to pay the \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million price tag for the

privacy, exclusivity and the feeling of security offered by a gated community.

Because the number of lots is limited, Noel predicts people will see huge increases in the value of their houses as the lots sell. Already, 20 of the 57 lots in the first phase of the subdivision have been sold, and five houses are constructed and occupied. He is aiming to have up to 10 built by the end of 2016.

To achieve his goals, he's not afraid of working long hours – often late into the night – seven days a week on his many ventures, which also include an engineering company.

Next up is a luxury development in California and the possibility of projects in Thailand and Sri Lanka, but first, he wants to get Onassa Springs settled (and build his own home there, but he said with his schedule, he hasn't yet found the time).

"There are no subdivisions in Ottawa with this high a benchmark," says Noel proudly. "This will become the 'it' place to be to show you have arrived and succeeded financially." **OH**



Cedarhill Golf and Country Club is adjacent to Phase 1 of the Onassa Springs project.

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