

RECREATION & INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

EDITOR: BARB LIVINGSTONE 403-235-7339

WWW.CALGARYHERALD.COM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2009

Getting WARMER



KATHY McCORMICK
CALGARY HERALD

The weather outside is frightful
It's the long, cold month of January that seems to never end.

What better time to think of pristine, sandy beaches, hot, sunny days, and warm, friendly people?

That's exactly what prompted John Wong Ken and his wife, Gerri Thompson, to buy a villa in La Bella Vita, the unique resort complex in Puerto Pe-

nasco, Mexico, being built by Calgarian Sam Sidhom.

"I'm originally from Jamaica, and I like the heat," says Wong Ken, who owns his own jewelry store in Calgary.

La Bella Vita will be one of the many projects on display at the upcoming **Calgary Herald Recreation and Investment Properties Show**. The event is part of HomExpo, which is being held from Jan. 16 to 18 in the Roundup Centre in Stampede Park.

SEE WARMER, PAGE J7



Photos, Dean Bicknell, Calgary Herald, and LBV Holdings Ltd.
La Bella Vita resort in Playa la Jolla in Puerto Penasco, Mexico.
Inset, buyers Gerri Thompson and husband John Wong Ken.

FROM JI

WARMER: 'Fell in love with the area'

"We'd been thinking about buying somewhere warm and before Christmas last year, we ran into a friend who had bought a place in Puerto Penasco years ago. He was with Sam — and the next thing you know, we were going down there in February.

"We fell in love with the area."

They bought a 1,400-square-foot, two-level villa with three bedrooms — and have been back twice more — and family have been enjoying the resort as well.

"We're using it year round," Wong Ken says.

That's one of the joys of Puerto Penasco, says Sidhom. The weather is good all year, with average temperatures in spring, fall and winter about 16 C to 24 C., and in summer from 27 C to 41 C.

The area is at the tip of the Sonora Desert on the Sea of Cortez on the mainland of Mexico. It's 360 km from Phoenix, the nearest beach to the city.

La Bella Vita, being constructed by Sidhom's company, LBV Holdings Ltd., is a 7.3-hectare beach-front community that is within the 15-hectare master-planned community of Playa La Jolla.

Earlier phases of La Bella Vita consist of a mix of 22 two- and three-storey townhouse villas — and 20 have already sold. The remaining inventory in this phase is a two-storey, 1,400-sq.-ft. villa and several fractional ownership opportunities.

The current phase, released early last year, consists of a mix of 24 bungalow-style walk-up apartment units and eight three-storey townhouse villas.

Fifty per cent of the first of five walk-up apartments has been sold and two reservations are in place for the townhouse villas.

Construction is almost complete on the first apartment building, with move-ins expected this spring.

In total, 120 apartment units will be built by completion. These units start at \$159,900 Canadian.

Features include granite countertops, tile flooring, air conditioning, and a domed ceiling. Common roof-top terraces are on each building.

Forty-six townhouse villas will be in place by completion, come fractional and some whole ownership. One-eighth fractional share starts at \$59,900 Canadian, while whole ownership is from \$319,900.



THE BUYERS

Gerri Thompson with husband John Wong Ken.

AGES: 53 and 44.

BACKGROUND: Wong Ken is originally from Jamaica and had always wanted to buy a resort home somewhere warm. He met Sam Sidhom of LBV Holdings through a friend. The friend had a

place in Puerto Penasco, Mexico, where Sidhom is building La Bella Vita, part of Playa la Jolla. They went down and bought a villa on their first visit. "We fell in love with the area," says Wong Ken. "It's not overly developed, so it's quiet and a little bit rustic, but in a nice way. The local flavour is still there. Sam is doing an excellent job of the project, too. He's taking the time to do things properly." The large numbers of Calgarians who have already bought there have impressed Wong Ken as well. In fact, the couple meets with these new neighbours here, continuing the friendship.

PROJECT: La Bella Vita, part of Playa la Jolla in Puerto Penasco, Mexico, overlooking the Sea of Cortez.

DEVELOPER: LBV Holdings.

WHAT THEY BOUGHT: A villa.

POSSESSION DATE: Last February.

INFORMATION: Visit the sales centre at the Springbank Airport, 2, 341 Noorduyn Park N.W., phone 403-288-3777, or visit www.LaBellaVita.com. Visitors can see the resort at the upcoming **Calgary Herald Recreation and Investment Properties Show**, part of HomExpo, from Jan. 16 to 18 at the Roundup Centre in Stampede Park.

The current phase consists of three-storey villas with three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a single-attached garage, roof-top deck, and

2,000 square feet of living space. All have unobstructed views of the Sea of Cortez.

One spec home is competed and ready for occupancy.

It is one of 62 single-family homes in the development. These start at \$300,000 and are single-level casitas starting at 950 square feet. Custom finishes are available.

The fractional ownership in Casa Del Mar — a 3,600-square-foot, beach-front home that is custom built — is sold out.

Existing amenities in the resort include a beach-front pool with hot tub, an amenity building with owners' lounge, outdoor fire pit, and such services as rental pool, on-site property management, and 24-hour security.

Future amenities are numerous. This year, the developer has plans to update the existing pool area and amenity building, and open a negative-edge pool, which is nearing completion, the second of three pools that will eventually be in the complex.

Other proposed amenities include an exercise room/fitness studio and spa, lighted tennis court, mini-golf, volleyball court, outdoor amphitheatre, and shuttle service to town and the international airport.

So far, many of the buyers have been from here, says Sidhom — and that was a factor with Wong Ken, as well.

"A real attraction for us was the number of Calgarians down there," says Wong Ken.

"They are really promoting a good community with good friends. We've been meeting people from Edmonton and Calgary, and having a great time, so it's not just a holiday destination. In fact, we get together here, too, so it's a continuation of our friendships that we started down there."

A presentation centre is located in a Springbank Airport hanger at 2, 341 Noorduyn Park N.W.

Call 403-288-3777 for information, or visit www.LaBellaVita.com.