



Dragonfly creates buzz in Bradford

Project developers' plan to design a community marker with a difference takes wing

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Bradford – When Great Gulf Homes gives a nine-metre-high stainless steel sculpture of a dragonfly to this town tomorrow, it will not only put the new development of Summerlyn Village on the map, it will also break new ground in civic art.

Residents of Bradford, northwest of Newmarket, have been abuzz since the massive sculpture first appeared a few weeks ago. Dancing and fluttering in the wind atop a nine-metre pole, its silver skin glittering in the sunlight, it has become a landmark and a conversation piece that can be seen from many kilometres away.

Tomorrow's ceremony, at 11 a.m. at the sculpture's base on the northwest corner of Highway 88 (Holland St. W.) and Summerlyn Trail, will mark the dragonfly's official "unveiling," with executives from Great Gulf handing it over to Bradford West Gwillimbury Mayor Doug White and council members.

The sculpture will also be officially named, based on votes cast by Summerlyn homeowners. The sculpture marks a significant departure from the stone pillars many developers erect to mark the entrance to their projects.

"We wanted to do something different," says Brad Keeler, senior project manager at the MBTW Group, which designed the landscape plan. "And because this site had a stream running through it and we've put in a large storm pond ... with bulrushes and a wetland habitat for wildlife, we thought of a dragonfly."

As well as serving as a marker for the site, Keeler says, it is also raising the bar on civic art by creating a talking point for the community.

"Some people might not get it, but many do – and that's the joy of art," he says. "Already you can see people stopping at the traffic lights in town and craning their necks" to see it. In commissioning the piece, they turned to renowned artist Ron Baird, 68, of Beaverton.



The nine-metre-high stainless steel dragonfly sculpture has become a local landmark and conversation piece.

"We started off talking about a clock tower," says Baird, who specializes in kinetic art – pieces that move in harmony with their environment – and has completed more than 150 commissioned public and private pieces.

"When we decided on the dragonfly, I built a 1/12 scale model which we wind tested – up here that means me standing in the back of my friend's pickup truck while he drives and I hold the piece in the wind to see how it reacts."

The finished sculpture is made of 103 polished stainless steel pieces which are articulated, allowing the wings to rise and fall and the body to move in the breeze. The piece is mounted on a tractor trailer wheel hub, which allows it to spin.

It took about 14 months from concept to completion, says Baird, who has family in Bradford – including two grandchildren who have pronounced the sculpture "cool." Baird is now working on civic pieces for Kitchener, Edmonton and a town in Northern Ireland.

Summerlyn Village is a 138-hectare property with many preserved natural components, including about 24 hectares of woodlot. When completed, it will be home to more than 1,000 families. The project is currently offering semis ranging from 1,445 square feet to 1,945 square feet, starting at \$260,000.

Detached homes on 36-foot lots range 1,445 to 2,440 square feet starting at \$320,000; and on 40-foot lots from 2,275 to 3,270 square feet, starting at \$360,000.