

Fabulous meets functional for the over-65 set

From out-swinging doors to non-slip floors, Quadrangle architect Susan Ruptash designs a living space you can grow old with

Just because a person is over 65 doesn't mean that he or she suddenly stops wanting to live in stylish surroundings. But being over 65 does mean that people will start to need some practical, and even necessary, design elements to make their living space age-friendly for now, and for years to come.

Enter Susan Ruptash, principal with Toronto-based Quadrangle Architects Limited, and their latest design success, *Hearthstone by the Bay* in Toronto.

Since 1988, Susan has been using her expertise in accessibility and independent living to design many successful Quadrangle projects. She recently authored new Barrier-Free Guidelines for the Ontario Realty Corporation in response to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

So when Davies Smith Developments planned to build a totally unique, upscale condominium for seniors who wanted to own their own home and maintain their independent living lifestyle, they turned to Quadrangle to design chic but functional suite features that would serve the needs of their purchasers both immediately, and as their physical needs increased over time.

Susan quickly identified key design features such as wide entrances and doorways to allow for walkers or wheelchairs, lever hardware on all doors and faucets for arthritic hands and joints, and electrical and telephone outlets 18 inches up on the wall so seniors don't need to bend down to plug in.

"The idea was to create a living space that served the immediate and future physical requirements of the residents, thereby eliminating their need to move to a more accessible living space or renovate their homes to accommodate for new physical challenges," says Ruptash. "We identified senior-friendly design elements, brought them all together under one roof and made them look elegant and attractive so that they simply became part of the space and not a glaring functional element."

The result is *Hearthstone by the Bay*, a five-star, 18-storey luxury condominium located in Etobicoke. What makes this building unique is that while other seniors' residences provide eldercare and health-related services up to a certain level, and then insist that the senior move to a higher-care facility, *Hearthstone* brings the care to the senior, allowing them to remain in the condo they originally bought, all the more reason to make the original condo design workable for all stages in a senior's life.



Susan Ruptash, principal of Quadrangle, designed *Hearthstone by the Bay* for Davies Smith. Susan's specialty is universal design and barrier-free living. Some of the features in *Hearthstone* are wide doorways to allow for walkers and wheelchairs, windows in the hallways for better natural lighting and easy-to-access wall lights and plugs.



Pre-sales of *Hearthstone by the Bay* are underway with construction to begin shortly. Occupancy of the building is set for December 2007. The *Hearthstone by the Bay* presentation centre is located at 2077 Lakeshore Blvd. W. It's open Monday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed Fridays. For more information visit www.hearthstonebythebay.com or call 416-259-4466.