

ON SITE

Oshawa becoming a happening place

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 Special to QMI Agency

East of Toronto, one of the last regions to develop in a growing GTA, North Oshawa is a far cry from the industrial heartland that people have come to know.

For generations, Oshawa has been Ontario's "motor city" with the giant General Motors Autoplex assembly plant employing thousands of local residents. But as times change, the city is experiencing a transformation to more academic and knowledge-based industries.

Like a trip back in time, the south end of the city is still relatively unchanged since the 1950s, replete with ramshackle strip malls, country and western bars and fast food drive-throughs.

It's the north end of the city where things are happening and quickly. A new demographic has developed in the region. From the Lakeridge Health facility to the UOIT campus, knowledge workers are being drawn from Toronto and other eastern communities all over Durham Region. North Oshawa is becoming a seat of higher learning, attracting the innovative and the academic

with schools like the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Durham College, and the Trent campus.

The North Oshawa lifestyle is truly a unique cross-culture of urban and rural. It's only a short drive from Oshawa's

downtown to experience pastoral farmland and open green spaces, including a portion of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The region is quaint, filled with historic mansions,

surrounded by farms and golf courses and beautiful parks like Camp Samac. And only 51 km east of

downtown Toronto, the "new" Oshawa is quite commutable.

People are particularly attracted to the real value that North Oshawa offers says Amanda Wilson Watkins, Minto Communities' Ontario VP of marketing and sales. "People are moving from nearby communities of Whitby and Oshawa. Nearly 60 per cent are coming from Markham, Richmond Hill and eastern neighborhoods of the GTA. It's one of the last places where there is truly room to roam, spread out and enjoy life, and build a family."

Minto is planning a huge new community in North Oshawa called KingMeadow, created from the old E.P. Taylor farm lands, where the great thoroughbred, Northern Dancer spent many happy days frolicking.

Tribute Communities is a builder with a legacy in Durham region with Windfields Farm, a community of detached homes in North Oshawa, and the Park Ridge community. Their latest plan is U.C., a new, master-planned, mixed-use family community in North Oshawa near the UOIT campus.

To meet the needs of the new population growth, several retail and transit initiatives are underway. Oshawa Centre,

the downtown shopping mall, is slated for a much-needed \$230 million makeover that started this summer. Retail development giant RioCan is launching a new shopping complex in North Oshawa. The old Five Points mall on Taunton Road is about to get a 400,000 sq. ft. retail renovation with anchor stores like Target, Metro and Staples.

"We've been surprised with the large mix of purchasers," says Wilson Watkins. "Oshawa's urban initiatives are attracting new neighbors from the western part of Durham, as well as York, many of whom are coming from the new knowledge-based economies and work outside of the immediate area." From a transit perspective, the area stands to benefit from the proposed highway 407 east extension that will provide a new direct link from North Oshawa to Toronto.

According to Wilson Watkins, "Things have changed a lot, and are expected to change even more. More family and cultural activities are arriving and those perfectly accent the old town neighbourhood charm."

Oshawa's downtown is also known for its excellent indie music scene and many cool new cafés are popping up that cater to a growing student population.



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