

# King Weekly Sentinel

General News

## Kingscross becoming the most sought-after community

December 16, 2015 · 0 Comments



By Mark Pavilons

The word is out.



As much as King residents may want to keep this oasis in the GTA all to themselves, discerning home buyers are eyeing an exclusive area near King City for their dream homes. And a niche builder is helping to make those dreams come true. He's creating one-of-a-kind masterpieces using Kingscross's palette. The mix of residents in this exclusive estate neighbourhood is as eclectic as the marvellous contrasts in diverse architecture. You'll find the maestro of this symphony of wood, stucco and granite literally "hard at work" in his own backyard.

Peter McCarthy, of Hard at Work Inc., currently has some 12 projects on the go in this historic neighbourhood, transforming the landscape. McCarthy admits he's the harbinger of change, ushering in an evolution of this enclave that dates back to the 1950s.

When you meander through Kingscross, you are taken by the beautiful, rolling topography. It epitomizes all of the best qualities of King Township. Some of the older homes, while quaint and inviting, are dated and showing their age. New home buyers, to whom money is no object, are seeking out their little piece of paradise, tearing down the old homes and opting for custom-built mansions.

The interest, from a long list of affluent clients, is skyrocketing. Hard at Work can't buy the properties fast enough to meet the demand for these luxury homes. McCarthy and his team – Conrad Kijewski, Jane Lesperance and his son-in-law and partner Vince Oppedisano – have been going strong in the last six years. Oppedisano is the hands-on front-line worker, on site 12 hours a day, juggling trades suppliers and clients. He is McCarthy's right-hand man and without him, they wouldn't be where they are today.

McCarthy likely never intended to become a niche home builder, but it all just fell into place. It grew with each new addition to the neighbourhood.

McCarthy pointed out that repurposing the properties is inevitable. Many of the homes were built with electric heat and are on well and septic systems. Some have no basements and others are at the mercy of the high water table in some areas.

The trend these days is to tear down and build new.

McCarthy and his wife Ellen purchased a home in Kingscross as a "retirement project." Typical house prices at that time were around \$720,000 and in today's market, Kingscross properties start at \$1.5 million. A home recently sold for \$4 million.

What has driven up the values so much in half a decade?

"We have," McCarthy admitted. Creating majestic, one-of-a-kind homes on beautiful properties has triggered a resurgence in interest from the rich and famous. "It's driven demand through the roof." And that benefits all homeowners in Kingscross.

King Township, considered the most affluent area in Canada, is no stranger to jaw-dropping opulence.

It shows in McCarthy's custom builds. Double-stacked four-car garages, accommodating eight vehicles, are common requests from clients.

With urban centres to the south filling up fast, King is becoming the haven for many in the GTA.

"King has a lot of appeal," he said, noting Kingscross specifically is minutes away from major commuter routes and has such unmatched serenity. "This is where they want to be," McCarthy stressed.

People who are buying these homes may do so for investment purposes. Some own more than one Kingscross property.

Hard at Work is prepared to purchase more homes in the neighbourhood. McCarthy pointed out some residents are elderly, live alone and have to contend with high property taxes and climbing maintenance on their homes. Given the current resale value, it gives them a perfect opportunity to move on.

McCarthy is not a "developer" in the true sense of the word. He's more of a conduit, a boots-on-the-ground go-to guy with a vision. He's built a rapport with his friends and neighbours. He's knocked on more than just a few doors, asking residents if they're willing to sell. Others have come to him because they heard about Hard at Work. Several existing residents have chosen to stay, and expand or rebuild their homes.

Other clients come to him and he gives them what they want, and more.

TV host, contractor and real estate investor Scott McGillivray fell in love with Kingscross and asked McCarthy to handle a very special project for him. Stay tuned for a TV series featuring McGillivray and his family in 2016.

McCarthy pointed out Scott is an amazing, accommodating customer, who trusts Hard at Work to bring Scott's wealth of design acumen to the forefront.

Most of McCarthy's clients give him carte blanche to create just what they want. And why not? McCarthy is a stickler for detail, right down to the tile pattern in the mud room, bullnose edging or wrought iron railings on the staircase. Ellen weaves her magic with the interior details, selecting everything from kitchen cupboards and faucets, to paintings and window coverings.

Hard at Work also has an excellent rapport with King Township staff, as well as various agencies such as Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA).

Not everyone is sold on his flurry of activity, but the consensus seems to be that new builds are improving the neighbourhood.

Wilson Markle, a 13-year Kingscross resident, said it's a well planned community where no two residences are the same. The 1970 original concept was to have unique design and style type houses created for the new development.

Today, some houses have fallen into disrepair and at least one is abandoned. Many other houses have either been replaced or require extensive renovations to bring them up to standard.

New residents seem to want change and requested sidewalks, curbs, and covered ditches. "This has also divided the community that does not want change," he said.

"Thankfully most do appreciate the improvement when completed," he said, referring to McCarthy's projects.

"Kingscross is gradually becoming a classic country style neighborhood of large houses on appropriately sized lots."

McCarthy builds turn-key homes and takes care of everything, right down to the gardens, curbing and gazebos (where permitted of course). He may even throw in a celebratory bottle of champagne for the new owners.

McCarthy's personal demand for quality is evident in his builds. The retired Royal Plastics executive and inventor (he marketed the first plastic extrusion garden sheds) has a creative eye. He tends to use the same skilled trades to ensure consistency and provide a certain standard that's conducive to the neighbourhood. Every home he builds comes with an elevator. Twenty-foot-high ceilings are common. McCarthy has begun importing hand-crafted wooden doors from Ecuador, whose artisans work wonders with native teak and seike. Heated garages with lifts are pretty much standard, as are meandering open staircases, sitting areas, offices, studies, in-law or nanny suites and multiple bathrooms.

His customers demand a high quality in terms of both aesthetics and functionality. Large kitchens are a must. In one home he's turned a built-in full length cupboard into a doorway to the pantry. Another home comes with a 20-foot sliding door to the back patio.

McCarthy noted they have to be up on the current trends and innovations, ensuring their builds have that "wow" factor.

McCarthy takes a great deal of pride in his work. After all, he lives there and cares about how his community is taking shape.

It's not all business for McCarthy. He has been involved in more than a dozen Habitat for Humanity builds in Canada and around the world. He has been known to cut people's lawns and remove the snow for the elderly. He even provided generators during that historic ice storm a couple of years ago. Since he's always providing around the subdivision tending to his properties, he also keeps an eye on things for his neighbours, watching for strangers and any odd behaviour.

Hard at Work is truly a family affair.

Ellen has been known to not only lead the charge on interior styling, she's planted several gardens herself.

Tara McCarthy, an agent for Laceby Real Estate, helps sell Kingscross homes. Not only does she live there, but she's become adept at handling all permit applications with the Township and various agencies like TRCA. She can provide clients with all of the services they need to move into their new King dream homes.

Living in Kingscross, she has an excellent relationship with neighbours and she understands these upscale homes.

"I have an excellent understanding of what it takes to buy and sell on a luxury level," she said.

Like it or not, our secret is out.

King's citizenry is a wonderful, unique blend of individuals who value country living.

While borrowing a cup of sugar in Kingscross takes on a different slant, neighbours in this unique community have a lot to be proud of.

For more on McCarthy's work, visit [www.hardatworkinc.com](http://www.hardatworkinc.com).