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Essex Homes brings new development to Lewiston with proven product lines

BY DANIEL DAVEY

Even under perfect economic conditions, residential real estate development would be a challenge in Lewiston. New single family home construction is generally few and far between compared to other Western New York areas.

Still, Essex Homes of Western New York, run by President and CEO Philip Nanula, is moving forward with its development of The Patios at Essex Ridge off of Upper Mountain Road near Bronson Drive. The development, slated to include 88 tree-lined patio home sites, is over a year into phase I, which is planned to include 36 sites for building. The first model home is just a couple weeks from completion.

"We're going to have a fully furnished, decorated model, located on Bridle Path Lane," Nanula said. "It's what I consider to be the flagship of our product line that we offer there – the Eastbrook model. This is a patio design."

Patio home, Nanula explained, is more a marketing term than anything else, to indicate a difference to what is typical condominium style construction. "People develop condos as a vertical product. In New York state, it really is a form of ownership. And the ownership can be shown in different styles. It can obviously be vertical, but it can also be town homes. What we'll have in Lewiston are detached (town homes)."

A one-story, ranch-type design, the homes are built with a host of buyer options – one of which is to go vertical and add a second floor, or additional first floor space. That, with the many options to consider for interior refinements, could make the Patios at Essex Ridge Lewiston project, as well Essex Homes' numerous other sites in Western New York, a welcome choice for nearly any lifestyle.

The Essex Homes designs have been "very well received," Nanula said. The company has existing developments in Amherst, East Aurora, Lancaster, Grand Island, Lakeview, Orchard Park and Clarence. Its newest Clarence location, the 108-lot Essex Greens at Waterford, is in its final phase of development. It's there Nanula has seen great success with the patio home designs. "That's why we're bringing this product line to Lewiston."

That product line consists of five different models. Four of those



The flagship Eastbrook model patio home in Lewiston will be furnished and available for viewing soon after construction is completed.

plans have the ability to have a second floor added if the buyer wishes. But all five have different, modern floor plans layouts with options.

"It's kind of rare, when you offer five different plans and all of five plans sell," Nanula said. "Normally, there's maybe one that doesn't sell, and that's really not the case here. All of our plans are selling well."

"The Eastbrook model in Lewiston just has the ranch version of that plan," Nanula offered. "We did a kind of unique custom option that we've never done before in the new Lewiston model, in that we put a large cathedral ceiling expansion on the family room, which really creates a lot of wow factor with its two-story stone mantel on the fireplace."

With his over 30 years in Western New York real estate, most of them at the helm of Essex – founded by and with his father, Savino Nanula, and his three brothers, Paul, Steven and Anthony, all of whom reside and work in Western New York – Philip Nanula has overseen many changes and fluctuations in his tenure.

Perhaps the biggest, though, is simply how single-family homes are being built today when compared to the past.

"The open space concept you hear about wasn't prevalent then," he said. "So, that is a big change in these products we build, especially the patio home projects. They're very, very open. So, you walk into the main space after the foyer ... typically the kitchen and dinette and family room and optional sunrooms are all open to each other."

"There weren't a lot of homes being built that had first-floor masters. We were one of the first home builders in Western New York that started introducing plans with first floor masters. Now it's very common," Nanula added.

Other changes in the industry are the materials being used. Brick has largely been replaced with stone elements. And more than design and structure, Nanula pointed out everything from ceiling heights to flooring options, cabinet finishes to hardware, has changed.

"It's definitely an evolution, and it's interesting to watch the dynamics of that," he said.

In the here and now, Nanula admitted none of those changes compare to those taken place in the last year-and-a-half of the COVID-19 pandemic. "In the 30 years I've been doing this, I've never seen anything come close to what's happened like this. Every day something new rears its head. In addition to people going out of business."

He pointed to contractors having closed their doors after years in business, which have increased lead times for materials and site installations. The effects have, at times, created a chain reaction.

"I've had houses throughout Erie County sitting just waiting for cabinets," he said. "And there's only so much you can do until cabinets are installed. You can't finish flooring, you can't finish backsplashes, you can't complete plumbing."

Nevertheless, Nanula envisions success with the Lewiston project. He was born and raised just minutes from the site, during the time his father was chairman and CEO of Tops Markets LLC. Nanula himself lived in Lewiston while commuting to Buffalo. He likes that the location is off the beaten paths of Western New York, while still being a short distance to the thruway to Buffalo, the Canadian border, Niagara Escarpment, the Falls, the Village of Lewiston and wineries.

SEE ESSEX, continued on Page 9

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