



Property of the Week: Shepherds Way, Granby

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By JAMES ALEXANDER

Rural beauty surrounds Shepherds Way, a new community of eight custom-built houses located in a private setting off of scenic Day Street in Granby. Lightly wooded lots range from just under one acre to nearly two-and-a-half acres, creating a traditional neighborhood feel with yards that are ideal for family activities. Adjacent open space is managed by the homeowners association or the Granby Land Trust.

The homes at Shepherds Way are impressive. John Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Builders mixes historic charm with modern style. Outstanding architectural designs are rendered with exacting craftsmanship that extends to even the smallest details.

“We want to carry attention to detail throughout the home,” Fitzgerald says. “I get bored with the standard builder home.”

There is nothing standard – or boring – about one home currently under construction in the Shepherds Way community. While the interior is in the framing

stage, realtor Maria Babicki points out areas where the builder has worked closely with the new owners and the designers to incorporate features that give the home personality and versatility.

Custom features include stately display niches with lighting for china and glassware, an upstairs layout with each bedroom having its own attached full bath, an English basement, and a handicap-accessible in-law apartment that is completely private yet manages to flow effortlessly into the main part of the house. There is even a small space dedicated to holding dishes for the dog.

“I like to work with people (for whom) details matter,” Fitzgerald says.

A couple who recently moved into their finished Shepherds Way home opted to bring in their own architect, Emil Dahlquist of Simsbury. Dahlquist and the owners worked extensively with Fitzgerald during construction and had nothing but praise for the builder and the process.

“He spent a great deal of time with us,” the wife says

of Fitzgerald. Her husband, who has building experience, adds, "He is a very competent and honest builder. And, he liked my jokes."

Fitzgerald works with some exceptional designers, according to Babicki. "The emphasis is on open floor plans and traditional designs that have an eye on being current," she says.

Potential clients will find a variety of home plans available, all of which can be modified to reflect their needs and style. In addition to Fitzgerald's own plans, renowned architect Jack Kemper has provided a catalog of designs for use at Shepherds Way.

"For me, he's the best at implementing people's ideas," says Fitzgerald of Kemper. "Right in front of you, he can get a plan to pop right off the page." Fitzgerald's building experience informs the design process. "I've been very involved in open floor plans, making sure that there is flow throughout the house, (with) no dead-end rooms," he adds.

As the home under construction demonstrates, Fitzgerald ensures that designs offer ample windows and rooms are sized appropriately. "I think that light is huge," he says. "I make sure there are plenty of windows and that the volume of space fits the needs of the room."

The goal is to be inviting, not intimidating. "Sometimes a room can be too big; sometimes too small," Fitzgerald says. "You have to balance the space, height and proportions with what people are going to use the room for." No room, he says, should overwhelm its occupants. "You may have walked into homes that are just cavernous and, as a result, you don't feel comfortable," he says.

Clients are the essence of Fitzgerald's business. "Peoples' lives are wrapped up in their homes. I want to make sure that at the end of the day, they love their home. That's very important to me," he says.

Fitzgerald's homes reflect current trends, with their nine-foot first-floor and eight-foot second-floor ceilings, the inclusion of large aesthetically and functionally appealing pantries and islands for the kitchens. Practicality is also a priority. "The builder does his utmost to help people make energy-efficient choices," says Babicki.

The homes stand out for their "clean lines," says Babicki. "It's a contemporary twist on classic designs," she says. Many designs feature first-floor master suites and all the homes have a three-car garage.

Among the unexpected features on the home under construction is a dining room with large glass doors that open onto the spacious and inviting front porch; a perfect touch that enhances an evening of fine dining. "I'm enchanted by this home and all it offers," Babicki says.

In many ways, this home is a reflection of Fitzgerald's overall approach to building. "We try to get what the customer wants, not what I want or what the architect wants," he says.

"It has to be a good collaboration with the designer, the customer and the builder. We all have to be in sync to achieve the best outcome and that is always our goal."

Visit the latest custom home under construction on Sunday, Jan. 10 from 1-4 p.m. See the website for turn-by-turn directions or enter "81 Day Street, Granby, Connecticut" on your GPS system as Shepherds Way has not yet been included on mapping databases.

For more information on the Shepherds Way community in Granby, contact Realtor Maria Babicki at 860-982-3073 or Ed Cox at 860-280-7239. Information on the site plan, home designs and more can be found by visiting www.thehomesatshepherdsWay.com.

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Shepherds Way, Granby, CT

Year built: New construction

Builder: John Fitzgerald of Fitzgerald Builders

Price: Starting at \$675,000

Style: Classic New England designs with transitional elements

Rooms: 8-11 or more

Bedrooms: 4 or more

Bathrooms: 2.5 or more

Square footage: Starting at 3,000 square feet

Acreage: From just under 1 acre to nearly 2.5 acres

Mill rate: 36.22 mills

Best feature: Homes of exceptional quality in a scenic, convenient location