

Line ups for real estate hit Mississauga

ERIN MILLS DEVELOPMENT

BY ZOSIA BIELSKI

Lining up overnight for real estate is becoming a regular sight in Toronto, so much so that hopeful buyers are perfecting their own first-come, first-served etiquette.

This time, about 100 people slumped in lawn chairs near the corner of Winston Churchill Boulevard and Erin Centre Boulevard in Erin Mills, a Mississauga burb that is rapidly filling with townhouses and big-box shopping plazas.

Some had camped out since Wednesday morning and many would spend up to three nights — the “Picket Fences II” townhomes did not go on sale officially until this morning.

The rules were simple: Showers took a back seat to roll calls that weeded out the uncommitted. Sleep, if any, was taken in the car, and boorish behaviour was left outside. Peanuts, sudoku and a sense of humour seemed to help.

Picket Fences II is the latest community to rely on word of mouth at these types of events for publicity and sales. The prices also help: Three-bedroom townhomes go from \$284,900 to \$309,000. The developer, the Daniels Corporation, specializes in affordable housing, and the 107 units are all expected to go this weekend.

Unlike Beyond the Sea, the Lake Shore condo that will not be constructed until 2010 but nonetheless had 150 real estate agents lined up this week, Picket Fences II is fully built and set for residents as early as 30 days, a dream for parents who want to get settled before school year starts.

Don Pugh, vice-president of Daniels’ low rise housing, touted the location: There are schools, access to two highways and even a bus stop, right outside the fence, which by the way, is not picket.

It all made the deal a little bit sweeter to the mothers and fathers who took a day (or three) off work to camp out in between the neat brick homes yesterday. As far as the “self-policing” line up was concerned, it certainly made things fiercer.

Besides portable toilets, water and moral support, Daniels reps butted out of the line up, mostly to avoid charges of favouritism.

Instead, Cathy Gundersen took charge of the line up. The gift shop owner — who failed to score a spot at Picket Fences, the developers’ first community of this type — was No. 6 yesterday; she had shown up on Wednesday afternoon.

After two and a half days, Ms. Gundersen looked surprisingly fresh and conceded to sneaking home for a shower while some family members subbed in.

Respect is key, she said, but wannabe buyers who missed roll call — called three times daily, at random — got “black listed” with an x.

“Once they have three, they’re bumped out of the line,” she said. “It’s a pretty funny little game.”

Magdy Barsoum was not impressed. He was No. 69.

“With all my respect and appreciation for Daniels as engineers and builders of units, nobody told me I was going to have to suffer for two nights and two

days waiting in a lineup that is inhumane,” Mr. Barsoum said.

Slouching on an uncomfortable-looking chair, the professional engineer was accompanied by his children, son Mina, 7, and daughter Mirette, 13, who liked the fact she was getting to know her new neighbours.

Still further back was Karen Renaud. Sitting at No. 143 — not a good place to be considering there are only 107 homes for sale — the stay-at-home mom was hopeful.

“I’m flexible,” Ms. Renaud said, a giant tome by Belva Plain in her lap. “I never get a chance to read; this a good opportunity. It’s the story of a Jewish family coming to America and their trials and tribulations. Sort of like this.”

Ms. Renaud estimated some buyers had dropped out since the last roll call. A few more hours, maybe a couple drops of rain, buyers unwilling to settle for houses other than their top choice — all these factors could put her in the running, she figured.

“It’s a study in sociology,” Mr. Pugh concluded. “In the line up, we end up knowing who the mayors are, who the sheriffs are — the dynamics are incredible.”

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zbielski@nationalpost.com



A rendering depicts the Daniel's Corporation's Picket Fences II Erin Mills community.