



# Lake and Country lifestyles

RECREATIONAL & INVESTMENT PROPERTIES

## Acreage developments popular with homeowners seeking more space

by Jenny Gabruch  
of SP Creative Services

Fresh air, panoramic views and a quiet, relaxed lifestyle with plenty of room to roam are among the draws of country living.

It's attracting more people out of the city and into wide-open spaces where families can pursue their dreams in tune with nature while enjoying greater privacy and personal freedom.

"A lot of people would like to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and have their own space," says Andrea Cobbold, a partner with Glacier Ridge Estates, an acreage development in the Rural Municipality of Dundurn, about 20 minutes south of Saskatoon.

"Families are realizing there are options. They want more for their money and a better quality of life."

Acreage living is a growing trend as families seek sufficient space to build their dream homes and enjoy a lifestyle that can't be achieved within the confines of increasingly compact city lots.

Wayne Wilson, a realtor with Re/Max, says while interest in the acreage market slowed somewhat following the big housing boom in Saskatoon, it has been steadily picking up steam.

"There seems to be renewed interest this year," he says. "The prices have come down on the one hand, and many builders are offering to build custom and spec homes. The activity is quite good, particularly for ones that are close to Saskatoon and that have access to city water. That seems to be where the highest level of interest is."

Greengate Estates, a new acreage development south of Saskatoon in the RM of Dundurn, is a prime example. It's surrounded by nature with plenty of room to breathe but is still within easy driving distance of Saskatoon.

The development offers 30 estates, ranging in size from three to six acres. The acreage community works around a central architectural theme of cozy-yet-elegant contemporary homes that are in tune with the rolling prairie landscape. It is fully serviced, and offers green and energy-efficient building options as well.

Real estate agents say fully serviced lots and proximity to the city are key considerations for buyers who want the flexibility of acreage living while enjoying the comforts of being close to the city.

"When you have five acres, you have more freedom," says Kris Miagza, an agent with Exit Reality, who lists property with The Meadows, an acreage community located northeast of Saskatoon on Highway 41. "If you want a big yard or garden, a garage or an outbuilding, it's possible."

Milo Anderson, CEO of Glacier Ridge Estates, agrees there are often fewer restrictions that come with country living.

"If you want to have a couple of chickens, you can do that. People can have bigger gardens and let the kids run at will without worrying," he says. "The one thing about acreage living that people like is having lots of flexibility."

Restrictions do come into play, however, which vary with each development. Like most acreage communities, Glacier Ridge has commercial restrictions as well as architectural guidelines.

"They're not rigid but specific enough that the community looks nice and the value is maintained," says Anderson.

There are 26 lots at Glacier Ridge, spanning from five to eight acres. Anderson notes owners do not have to build within a certain time frame, as some developments require. Owners can hold onto the land, leaving it undeveloped as an investment. They may also use their own contractor should they decide to build.

"It gives people a chance to save their money, and get their plans in place. They can also time it with the economy. When labour is not so expensive, they can build at that point," says Anderson. "We like to have that option ourselves – it's an investment in the future."

Value is another big plus for those choosing acreage living, says Wilson. "You can get five acres of land for the same – if not less – money than what a 50-foot lot in the city would cost you."

Lots at The Meadows, for example, start at \$129,000. The new development features 20 fully serviced lots, ranging from five to 10 acres. Lots at Glacier Ridge start at \$84,900. At Greengate, lots begin at \$128,900.

And there are other perks. For many, pets and nature are a big advantage of having a rural address.

Glacier Ridge is one of few estate developments that allow owners to have one horse per acreage. It features a rolling landscape and is located about a mile off of the main highway.

"It's very quiet," says Anderson. "There's no traffic noise, and you can actually see the hills of Blackstrap."

And while many people choose acreage living for the solitude and serenity – where they can gaze out the window at nature and wildlife instead of their neighbour's home – there is also a sense of community.

"We're trying to build that feeling of community, as opposed to just living somewhere and not knowing your neighbours," says Anderson. "Many of the neighbours have already met and chatted."

Whatever the reasons for country living – whether it's returning to their rural roots or simply a chance to enjoy more room to breathe – homeowners today have more options than ever when it comes to living just beyond the city lights.



Acreage living gives families room to build their dreams in tune with nature. (Photo courtesy of Glacier Ridge Estates)



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