

# Snowbirds nest at Dove Mountain

BY MARTY HOPE, CALGARY HERALD FEBRUARY 5, 2011



Murray and Joyce Fox enjoy hiking the Tortolita Mountains near their winter home at Dove Mountain near Tucson, Ariz.

If it hadn't been for Eugene "Cush" Cayton and his ailing health, Dove Mountain might not have happened.

In 1926, the Missouri businessman headed to the Tucson, Ariz. area for the good of his health.

On the advice of a local surveyor, he bought up a chunk of the Ruelas Canyon in the Tortolita Mountains, where he built the T Bench Bar Ranch.

History has it that Cayton said: "One of these days, this land will be one of the most beautiful spots in the Tucson area."

Some six decades later, that same piece of scrub land continues to be transformed by David Mehl's Cottonwood Properties Inc.

The company is creating a massive, master-planned community called Dove Mountain northwest of Tucson.

The project has become the winter home for a strong representation of Calgarians who have discovered its laid-back lifestyle.

Brian Hodgson, who retired in 2001 after 38 years in Calgary's housing industry — including 12 as executive vice-president and chief operating officer of Carma Developers — says there are at least 20 couples from Calgary living at Dove Mountain.

They were lured there by the same factors: weather, recreation activities like golf and hiking, and a slower lifestyle than what they thought Phoenix was offering.

Dove Mountain will have as many as 5,500 homes when it reaches build-out.

Of the nearly 2,500 hectares of land covered by the project, 800 hectares consist of a dedicated environmental reserve.

After starting to go to Arizona on business in the mid-1980s, Hodgson decided he and wife Dawn would eventually have a home there when he retired.

“But it didn't make sense to try to take it easy in a place (Phoenix) three times the size of Calgary — hence the Tucson area, which has close to one million people, but is spread out over a much larger area,” he says.

There are 10 sub-communities and three golf courses within Dove Mountain, says Jack Horner, director of sales and marketing for Dove Mountain Properties,

Five of those communities currently offer new homes. To date, there are about 3,000 homes in the overall development, with another 320 hectares yet to be developed.

New home prices in Dove Mountain range from \$200,000 to about \$3 million US, while resale homes are from \$125,000 to more than \$800,000.

“Dove Mountain is a golf resort community nestled against the Tortolita Mountains with some of the most spectacular views there are,” says Horner — adding that it's this and more that is attracting a growing number of Canadians.

Murray Fox and his wife, Joyce, enjoy hiking, golfing, and the relaxed atmosphere offered by the Tucson and Dove Mountain areas.

Fox, who joined Carma Developers in 1983 as chief financial officer, retired as CEO, leaving the company in the equally talented hands of Alan Norris.

Like the Hodgsons and others, Fox found that Phoenix had become a big city — with all the problems big cities inherit.

The final straw occurred when Murray and Joyce — who were staying in Scottsdale, Ariz., at the time — were invited to a friend's home on the west side of Phoenix for dinner.

They left 90 minutes before it was due to start and ended up being an hour late due to things such as traffic and construction delays, says Fox.

“That was the night we decided to take a look elsewhere in Arizona to see if there were other areas we might look at without the big-city issues,” he says.

A year later, the Foxes were in Tucson golfing at The Gallery golf course at Dove Mountain.

“We fell in love with the mountain topography, high Sonoran desert vegetation and smaller city environment — and the kicker was when we played The Gallery, one of the prettiest and best courses we had played in the desert,” says Murray. “In fact, we bought memberships to the course before we bought a home.”

Ultimately, the decision to buy a winter home is about lifestyle.

In terms of Arizona, Hodgson says the Phoenix area will continue to be the major destination for the majority of Calgarians and Western Canadians.

“I advise people who are thinking about a second home and spending part of the winter in Arizona to make sure they critically assess their personal lifestyle wants and needs — and particularly remember they are going to be living here for four to six months, not just being a short-term visitor in a resort-like environment,” he says.

For Hodgson, Fox and the other Calgarians living there, Dove Mountain’s atmosphere, amenities and housing choices were the answer.

“The one constant has been that no Calgarians who come to the Dove Mountain area left the overall community to live elsewhere, but have moved around within it,” says Fox.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Insight Homes is the most active builder in The Preserve, a gated community within Dove Mountain that features homes on 65-to 80-foot lots, each backing onto desert green space. The builder is offering semi-custom homes priced from \$350,000 to \$750,000 US (house and lot) for homes ranging from 2,350 to 3,700 square feet. The company has two different home series and six designs, as well as allowing buyers the flexibility to build their homes to fit their needs and lifestyle, “We have sold 75 homes to date and have another 50 lots available,” says Insight Homs owner Mike Jones. “Every home is Energy Star qualified.” For information, visit [www.insighthomes.com](http://www.insighthomes.com)

## **WARMING UP TO DESERT**

The Dove Mountain master-planned community contains almost 2,500 hectares of land, including more than 800 hectares of dedicated environmental reserve.

It also borders about 2,200 hectares of adjacent environmental preserves. The project is located northwest of Tucson, Ariz., in the town of Marana.

The topography is lush high Sonoran desert at elevations between 2,700 and 4,300 feet above sea level at the foot of the Tortolita Mountains.

The overall community — made up of over 10 sub-communities — will have as many as 5,500 residential units at build out, says Jack Horner of Dove Mountain Properties.

There is currently just under 3,000 units.

“Between 20 and 30 homes are owned by Canadians in the community — the vast majority from Calgary,” he says.

The development has three private golf courses, as well as 27 holes of golf at the Ritz Carlton Resort — the current home of the PGA Accenture Match Play Tournament.

It also has an extensive system of walking and hiking trails, along with the adjacent preserves and a neighbourhood commercial centre.

Visit [www.dovemountain.com](http://www.dovemountain.com)

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