

Couple looked to future when deciding to move

When they visited new apartment building, they simply fell in love with the place

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SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Your apartment has a lot going for it. It's quiet and bright. You have direct access to the landscaped garden. You're in a quiet neighbourhood across from a church and a short walk from the village area. What was behind your decision to move here?

Sylvie St-Aubin: Well, we owned two properties – one in Beaconsfield and one that we built in the Laurentians about 10 years ago. Then we wanted a change, so we started to discuss downsizing and selling the one in Beaconsfield, which we did.

How did you find this place?

St-Aubin: We noticed it in a newspaper ad. We already know the Beaufort area, and we knew this used to be an old school. We knew nothing else about it. But then we came to visit and fell in love with the place. We saw how well the units were built. I asked the owner, the contractor and the architects a lot of questions. They were all there working very hard and stopped everything to talk to us.

Before you commit yourself to a big move, you have to take it seriously.

St-Aubin: Exactly. And because we already owned a property we were comfortable in and accustomed to for more than 22 years, we didn't want to rush it too much.

Were you among the first residents to move in?

St-Aubin: I think we were the second ones.

How did it feel to sell and say goodbye to your old home?

St-Aubin: I thought it would be harder. But things went so fast. We sold the house very quickly. Then, we visited places to buy and to rent. But when we saw this place, everything came together.

Did you have enough room for your things?

Shelter

Shelter is a weekly series featuring conversations about apartment and condo living.

Occupants: Sylvie St-Aubin, an employee of a major airline based at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport, and her husband, a self-employed advertising writer, editor and translator

Size: A garden level, 750-square-foot, two-bedroom apartment with private entrance, patio on a landscaped terrace, with air conditioning, indoor parking, storage locker

Location: Les Jardins Beaufort, a new, high-end, no-smoking rental project for people aged 50 and over. The 37-unit, two-storey building, incorporating a former grade school, sits on a two-acre landscaped lot a short walk from Beaufort Village in Beaconsfield.

Rent: \$1,450

Been there: About two months

St-Aubin: A lot of things. But when you've downsized after living 20 years in a place, let me tell you that it's rock 'n' roll.

You mean it kept you busy for a while?

St-Aubin: Well, we did a major decluttering, maybe three or four years ago. So we weren't in a panic state. We also brought pieces of furniture up north. And we were surprised how many big pieces of furniture – like this armoire – that you can fit with this layout.

Familiar pieces can soften the blow of moving into a new place. What are some of the things you like about the unit?

St-Aubin: Here in the end terrace, we have windows all around. So the place is very bright. The floors are beautiful. I was pleasantly surprised, because it's often floating boards. But these are the real thing. It's a no-smoking building – I'm happy about that. And did you visit the garden?

(We step through a doorway leading from her husband's desk directly to the patio and landscaped back lot, which is surrounded by colourful neighbouring cottages. St-Aubin explains that a pond is going to be constructed in the spring among a



PHOTOS: DAVE SIDAWAY THE GAZETTE

Sylvie St-Aubin with her dog, Tess, in her living room of her new two-bedroom apartment. Downsizing was not that difficult, she says.

stand of mature trees.)

I take it the landscaping is a factor for you?

St-Aubin: Well, I come from the country. I was born in the country. What's important for me is when you wake up, you can take a coffee outside. It's where the sun rises and sets. We have it all day. And then there are so many plants. I was impressed.

So this used to be a schoolyard?

St-Aubin: Yes. And it was good of the owner to keep the trees, because very often a developer will flatten everything and hire a landscaper to rebuild everything. They worked around the trees.

It's very private, very nice and tranquil.

(We walk back inside.)

What are some of the other advantages of renting? No more tax bills?

St-Aubin: It's more than that. After owning for many years, you're mortgage-free. But the house where we were in Beaconsfield was 50, 60 years old. And there's always something we had to redo, which was fine at the time. But af-



This is the exterior of Les Jardins Beaufort, built around a former elementary school.

ter a while, you realize it's never done. And you have to make a decision about the future. And it has nothing to do with age.

How do you like the location?

St-Aubin: We can walk to the village, which is very cute. It's not growing at a fast pace. They just opened a great pub with more

than 40 kinds of beer, which my husband is very happy about. He's from England. And it takes me about 20 minutes to go downtown on (Highway 20). So I don't feel isolated. And there's a train, but I prefer to drive.

So where do you see yourself in five years?

St-Aubin: We are open to all sorts of things. I've asked the owner if this place will one day be turned into condos – because if you fall in love with a place and you aren't the owner, you never know what decisions can be made. But no, this place will always be rental.