

Dream comes true for Aurora's newest family with Habitat for Humanity



(The Lippa Family, joined by dignitaries from Habitat for Humanity GTA, Daniels, and the Town of Aurora, walk through their front door for the first time on Thursday afternoon. Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

By Brock Weir

The long-held dreams of one York Region family came true in Aurora Thursday afternoon as Habitat for Humanity formally dedicated its latest home.

Cesidio (?Sid?) and Rose Lippa, along with their daughters Loryanne and Lucyanne, were on hand to accept the keys to their new home on the southeast corner of Bayview Avenue and St. John's Sideroad, part of the new Daniels First Homes Development.



The Lippa Family

This Habitat home is just the latest in a series of collaborations between Daniels and the non-profit.

According to Habitat, the Lippas are a ?tight-knit, hard-working couple? currently renting in less-than-ideal conditions in Richmond Hill.

Their home is currently a ?small, old, rundown two bedroom basement apartment that has water damage and mold infestation?, and is very crowded for a family of four, says Habitat. The family is eager to make the move up north to provide a better life for their daughters.

“First of all, we are really excited because, for me, it is my first chance to buy a home,” Sid tells The Auroran. “To think that this is my house now is nice. We have been waiting for more than 15 years, and finally I am really excited thanks to Habitat. This is a great opportunity for us to make the switch. We're not old yet, so we have lots of time to go through the mortgage. Plus, we have two beautiful daughters and we need to make sure they grow up in a healthy place.

“The place where we are, still, is not healthy for our kids. There is mold. During the winter it is cold and humidity comes in the summer. There are so many things.”

Compared to recent York Region Habitat builds, this one is unique in that the organization did not have to build it from the ground up. This townhouse was essentially complete in its most basic form. Drywall had been installed, along with the furnace and water heater. The rest – ranging from installing counters, cabinetry, doors, fixtures and paint – was all up to the family and a very dedicated team of volunteers.

This is Aurora's first Habitat home, and according to Habitat's Phil Washburn, it is not likely to be the last. Having recently merged with Toronto to form Habitat For Humanity GTA, they are really aiming to ramp up their York Region builds, shooting for 25 houses a year to help 25 York Region Families.

Washburn spent Saturday helping Sid and Rose understand the ins and outs of home-ownership, including taking on the all-important mortgage. This was not the first time the couple had applied for a Habitat for Humanity home but everything aligned just right this year.

“We are looking for families that are of a low-income nature and have lived in egregious circumstances, either because they are paying excessive rent, or they are living in an unhealthy environment,” says Washburn.

“The family also has to be able to carry a mortgage because this is not a handout. It is a hand-up. They are buying this house on a mortgage just like every other homeowner that you know. One advantage is we hold the mortgage and it is low-interest. They are buying the home, paying the full market value, they have to have the ability to pay the mortgage and that comes with having a minimum of debt.”

Becoming a Habitat homeowner also requires a willingness to work 500 hours on Habitat projects, ranging from a house build – your own, or somebody else's – or working in their Re-Store.

“This is not like a down payment, but it is kind of in lieu of that,” he explains. “It requires them to put some participation into the whole process so they are really earning their home and starting to contribute and help Habitat.”

Following Thursday's dedication, Sid and Rose say they hope to begin moving in fully on the weekend of July 4.

“Habitat is doing a great job for the community,” says Sid. “It is not just for us, but they really try to help families in need. Many more people are in bad situations and people should be aware there is someone out there [to help].”