



The natural wood exterior and stone foundation of the timber-framed Cedar Creek Townhomes blend perfectly into the setting at the base of Mount Alyeska in Girdwood, Alaska.

The mountain is seen in the background.



Built to Last

A high-end Alaska townhome built with laminated logs holds up to the harsh weather



The fireplace showcases a 40-year-old wood carving created by a Native American from the Tlingit tribe. Since the time these pictures were taken, a wood craftsman has transformed the fireplace by creating a custom-mantel and wood paneling around the artwork.

For many years,

Jennifer and Ken Alexander, along with their 8-year-old son Noah, would travel about 40 miles from their Anchorage, Alaska, home almost every weekend to spend time in the ski resort town of Girdwood. In 2005, the family decided to pack their bags permanently, moving into their new timber-frame townhome located at the base of Alyeska Mountain and close to the five-star Alyeska Ski Resort.

As the first high-end townhome project in Girdwood, the Cedar Creek Townhomes were an answer to the rise in demand for both vacation and permanent residences in the town. The three-unit complex, designed and supplied by International Homes of Cedar Inc., Woodinville, Washington, is the first of several planned for the community.

With exterior walls of cedar and interior wall partitions conventionally framed with Sheetrock, the townhomes combine elements of modern residential architecture with the woodsy cabin feel of the past. While the pine ceilings with exposed beams give the homes a rustic flair, the painted walls, tile and carpeted floors make the house feel more like a home and less like a ski lodge — something Jennifer Alexander wanted to avoid. IHC president Rodney Robertson, an Alaska native, says the timber-framed townhomes are a perfect fit for the mountain community.

"People love natural wood in a heavily wooded setting like you have at Alyeska," Robertson says. "So here,

you get all natural wood, but a little bit more of a refined look because of the engineered timbers that IHC uses. So I think it's that blending between a natural look, but not being so rustic that it can still look pretty modern."

At first, the Alexanders were reluctant to buy a townhome. But the location of Cedar Creek Townhomes — just 200 yards from the base of the Alyeska ski lift, with a creek behind the property — offered an ideal setting for the avid skiers. With 2,100 square feet of living space spread across four levels, the townhome proved to be large enough for the family. They put a contract on the home before it was completed, and Ken, a general contractor,



In the great room, the mixture of cedar walls and beam work, along with painted walls of sheet rock, provide a refined look of rustic elegance. Expansive windows offer breathtaking views.

Story by Karen Doss Bowman • Photos by James Ray Spahn • Styling by Colleen Macomber

finished much of the interior work himself.

Most IHC homes are built with western red cedar engineered timbers, which are resistant to mildew and decay and are strong insect repellents. The cedar timbers also are well-insulated, making them ideal for extremely cold climates. The Cedar Creek Townhomes also feature IHC's trademark kiln-dried, laminated timber walls in conjunction with the company's patented interlocking system for the corners and the seams where the walls are joined.

"That makes our building systems dramatically stronger than conventional construction or typical log construction," says Robertson, pointing out that a number of IHC homes have survived hurricanes and earthquakes.

The 35-foot high townhomes maximize the spectacular views of Mount Alyeska while offering an efficient design. The first level, or ground level, is devoted to the two-car garage and entryway, along with storage space and a mechanical room. The second level includes two bedrooms with suite baths, and a balcony off one of the rooms. The third level has the common living areas, such as the kitchen, dining room, living room, half bath and laundry facilities. The fourth level is a master suite with a bedroom, bathroom, two walk-in closets and a deck.

The homes are heated with in-floor radiant heat, which costs more up front, Robertson explains, but is the most efficient form of heat. Though their former home was smaller, the Alexanders didn't see an increase in their heating bills at the new townhome. They are now fans of in-floor radiant heat, she says: "Now we could never live without it."

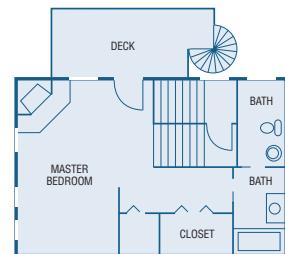
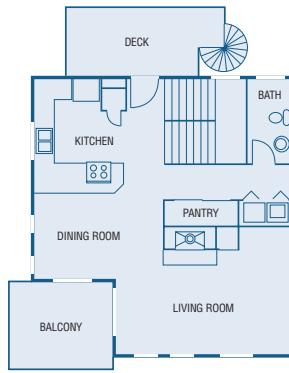
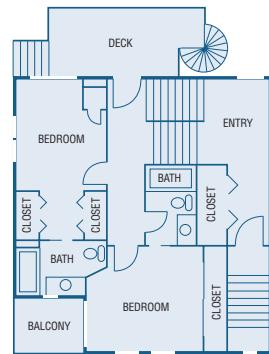
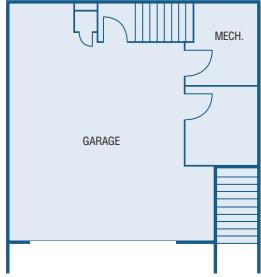
IHC designed the homes with several special amenities, including fireplaces in the great room and the

RIGHT: The breakfast nook showcases the home's cedar walls. This eating area is open to the kitchen and living areas.

OPPOSITE: The kitchen offers functionality and style. The ample cabinet space and an island with a bar blend nicely with the stainless steel vent hood and all-black appliances. Homeowners have the option for a dumbwaiter coming from the garage and up into the tiny closet beside the refrigerator to assist with unloading groceries or other large items.









The Cedar Creek Townhomes are located just 200 yards from the base of Mount Alyeska and the ski lift at Alyeska Ski Resort.

master bedroom, decks on each level, and the option for a dumb-waiter running from the garage up to the kitchen. A firepit on the covered deck provides a place for the Alexanders to enjoy quiet dinners in almost any weather.

While the three townhome units are identical except for some of the homeowner options, the Alexanders added their own personal touch to their home. They transformed the great room's fireplace into a focal point by hiring a wood craftsman to custom design the mantel and the wall above it. The area showcases a wood carving by a Native American artist from the Tlingit tribe, a piece that Jennifer's parents bought more than 40 years ago and passed on to the couple.

IHC has plans to build more homes at the Cedar Creek property,

RIDIN' THE STORM OUT

The strength of the homes built by International Homes of Cedar Inc. lies in the unique kiln-dried, laminated timbers and the company's patented interlocking joint system.

"Engineered timbers are over 70% stronger than rough-sawn timbers," says IHC President Rodney Robertson. "They are pound-for-pound stronger than steel. When these engineered timbers are combined with IHC's patented interlocking system, the result is one of the strongest building systems in the world."

One such home, located three miles from the epicenter of the 1994 Northridge, California, earthquake survived with no damage. Another home only 10 miles from where the eye of Hurricane Charley made landfall in Florida in 2004 was also completely undamaged. And IHC home on Kauai, Hawaii, survived Hurricane Iniki in 1992 with no damage.

"Engineered timbers are growing in popularity for a variety of reasons," Robertson says. "They're lighter, stronger, perform better, have a higher appearance grade, are more pest resistant — especially when coupled with cedar — allow the use of second-growth forest products. Since engineered timbers are dry throughout, they weigh dramatically less than logs," he says. "This means they can be set by hand, rather than with a crane, which significantly decreases the cost of building."

Laminated timbers provide several advantages over rough sawn timbers, he continues. "Laminated timbers are over 70% stronger than rough sawn timbers. Laminating also prohibits defects from penetrating completely through the timbers, virtually eliminates shrinking, warping, and checking, and provides superior appearance."



HEAT FOR THE FEET

In-floor radiant heat may be the answer to your cold feet. While there are many different types of radiant heat systems, IHC president Rodney Robertson explained the system at the Cedar Creek Townhomes. First, a subfloor was put down, and the heating tubes were laid across the floor in loops. Next, a lightweight concrete was poured over the tubes. Finally, the floors are finished off with carpeting, wood, or tile — whatever the homeowner prefers.

An in-floor radiant heat system is one of the most efficient methods of heating a home, Robertson says. Often, the temperature in a room heated with an in-floor system may be kept a few degrees lower than a room heated with a traditional system with the same comfort level. "We perceive the heat around our heads, but it's also affected by whether our feet are warm or cold," Robertson explains. "You can actually keep the room a little cooler [with an in-floor system], but feel the same temperature." Though the in-floor systems are more costly to install, Robertson points out that the savings most people see in their monthly heating expenses make it a worthwhile investment.

as well as other projects at resort areas around the country, including Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

"This project highlights the design capabilities of IHC," says Robertson. "We did this from the ground up, a custom design in a resort area. That's what people are looking for — something that fits in to the Alyeska community. We're setting a new benchmark for what a high-end structure should look like."

RESOURCES

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 2,100

BEDROOMS: 3

BATHS: 3.5

LOG PRODUCER: International House of Cedar, Woodinville, WA (circle 187 on the Reader Service card to receive free information)



From their covered deck with the firepit, the Alexanders enjoy relaxing dinners and optimal mountain views nearly every evening in the summer months.

OPPOSITE BELOW: The master bedroom features a fireplace and sitting area for ambiance and an additional heat source. Outside this window is one of the home's five decks.



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