

BUILDERS OFFER MORE CHOICE FOR NEW HOME BUYERS

Through their varied lifestyles and location preferences, new home buyers have helped to create a demand for different housing types as well as a desire for more variety in designs of homes of all sizes. This demand has spurred both creativity and innovation as builders and architects are challenged to improve the use of space and to demonstrate more imagination in home plans to meet the evolving needs of today's families.

Every home design begins with an analysis of the lot size the home is to occupy and compatibility with the regulations which govern the size of home that can be built. Beyond these planning principles, the design process is really guided by the constantly evolving requirements of you – the new home buyer.

In a relatively short time period, say the past decade, lifestyles have changed and so have peoples' priorities. Our modern families are time constrained and want to be able to prepare food, relax, and entertain while catching up with each other. Homes with open concept floorplans accommodate this lifestyle and the Great Room, as part of a spacious configuration of kitchen/eating/living area, has become the new heart of the home. Formal living rooms have virtually disappeared in the more compact footprint, eclipsed by the introduction of "flexible space" to be used as a home office, retreat or den as the owner prefers. New home floorplans you review today will not include a 'computer niche' because the prevalence of Wi-Fi systems has negated the need for this tiny, dedicated space. Current designs often have spacious master bedroom retreats which offer an oasis of privacy – a possible response to more open main floors. These retreats may include a television viewing or sitting area, a fireplace, and an ensuite bathroom with spa-style appointments to pamper the owners!

As the 'baby boomers' move through their lives into pre- and post-retirement years, we are witnessing the popularity of 'adult lifestyle' communities as well as a resurgence of bungalows, although designed very

differently from those built in the post-war era. Bungalows which appeal today include large, open concept principal rooms that are generously proportioned, private main floor master retreats with spa-like ensuite bathrooms, and optional lofts which provide separate living areas for a home office or hobby room, live-in adult children or overnight guests.

Looking to the outside appearance of new homes you'll find that many master-planned communities incorporate strict architectural control guidelines which govern the integrity of exterior elevations, the variety of materials

home buyers to bungalows-with-loft detached homes designed for families and those moving-down.

We have found that today's buyers are willing to move to accommodate their changing lifestyles and, for the most part, builders have embraced consumer demand for different housing options. For example, Geranium has begun preview appointments for Forest Trail Estates in the village of Ballantrae our new signature community of 50 manor homes set on estate lots of approximately one-acre. The unique attributes of this location, alongside the Oak Ridges Moraine, signaled to us that a particular style of neighbourhood would be in demand here. Again, we are providing a choice for home buyer's who seek the exclusivity of an architecturally-controlled estate home community without the investment of time required to manage a custom build.

Whichever buyer 'category' you may fall into, think about your lifestyle before you choose your home. Do you have an older adult or perhaps a nanny who will live with you? Is there a home office in your immediate future? Are you dependent upon public transit to get to and from your job? Is access to outdoor activities important to your lifestyle? The home buyer who takes the time to think about these and other lifestyle questions will discover that they are better equipped to find exactly what they are looking for among the many new homes available.

Geranium Homes has been developing and building family communities across Southern Ontario for over 30 years and has built more than 7,000 homes to date. In 2010 the company committed to building all future Geranium communities to ENERGY STAR® for New Homes performance levels.

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used, and minimize the repetition of particular designs. With more attention being paid to designing attractive neighbourhood streetscapes, the garage has taken a back seat to inviting front porches. As well, builders are taking a fresh approach to the rear of the home to incorporate covered loggias or verandas that overlook the garden. These outdoor rooms offer privacy and shelter, essential for smaller lots and in higher density developments where neighbours are closer together.

In many master-planned communities, such as Geranium Homes is building at The Neighbourhoods of Cardinal Point just north of Main Street, Stouffville, a variety of home styles are created among the 400-plus total residences. The result is a diverse and vibrant neighbourhood which attracts people of all ages and life stages to homes that range from small townhomes ideally suited to young, first-

