



# The *evolution* of new-home design

**TODAY'S NEW-HOME SHOPPERS** have a fantastic selection of designs to choose from. New communities offer exciting portfolios of designs crafted through the collaboration of builders and architectural designers, and in the Greater Toronto Area, we are blessed with some of the industry's finest. One of them is Wayne Cassidy, MAATO, principal at Cassidy and Company Architectural Technologists.

For the past 30 years, Cassidy has worked on everything from production housing to a 29,000-sq.-ft. custom residence. In conversation with Cassidy, I asked about designing new homes in the 21st century. He pointed out the fact that, "Successful new-home design begins with the marketing team identifying the target market, then understanding local influences and the current economy. Whether it's a townhome or a mansion, we have to meet marketplace criteria."

Cassidy also noted that spaces within the homes have shifted, with large open-concept family room-kitchen-dining areas replacing the traditional living room and

making way for libraries, storage-recycling areas and other elements modern families want. "The marketplace has changed a lot. Newcomers have different needs, and designers have come up with fresh ideas and innovations to meet these expectations. We've been asked to add things like prayer rooms and wok kitchens, for example. We put a great deal of thought into design, and over the past few years, buyers have upped the ante in other ways."

According to Cassidy, many of today's new exterior designs have been influenced by the past, and he and his industry peers are creating a new heritage of Ontario design. "Today's knowledgeable buyers want maintenance-free items and a greater variety of materials like stone and stucco. Suppliers are answering the demand with innovation. Years ago, vinyl windows came only in white; today they are available in many colours. Along with stricter architectural guidelines from municipal governments, this protects the quality of new communities."

In addition, Ontario Building Code requires more stringent standards than ever before. "Architects stay on top of advances in Green building practices to incorporate them into design. Builders educate the market about the benefits of these elements." To stay current, Cassidy invites trades and suppliers to provide lunch-and-learn seminars to his staff on new products and trends. "I am also on the colour advisory committees of brick and stone manufacturers," he adds. "This enables me to look at each new community with a fresh eye to design."

In the past, Canadian design also took cues from US design trends, but architects such as Wayne Cassidy have made us today's North American industry leaders.

*This is the second in a series of articles on topics of interest to new-home buyers, authored by Sue Webb Smith, marketing director for Geranium Homes.*