

Community

Designs for life, at every stage

Three families open their doors and share their experiences of living in very different Geranium Homes neighbourhoods

Mike Darrell, 36, and Shannon Lefebvre, 39

THE COURTS OF SOUTH ROUGE, PICKERING

Shannon and I are teachers. We have two children — Braelynn, 6, and Kylan, 4. We used to live in north Pickering and we felt that the school in our neighbourhood didn't quite meet our standards. After some research, we found that one of the best was in South Rouge, and we went to look at it. We really liked the school and the neighbourhood, which had big old trees and larger homes.

At the time, the Geranium Homes development there — the Courts of South Rouge — was just getting underway and we learned Geranium had great reviews. We liked their green building practices and the fact that they build to Energy Star standards. As the first family to buy, we had our pick of lots. The lot we chose has a protected area beyond our property line, so it's like we have a forest in the backyard.

Our home is 2,931 square feet, with four bedrooms and four bathrooms. There's a really nice flow to the design. The main floor is open-concept with a kitchen, dining room and great room. I really like our master bedroom with its his and hers walk-in closets and the glass shower in the ensuite. The setting is fantastic, too. We are a five-minute walk from the Rouge River, Lake Ontario and a conservation area. It will be perfect for hiking and biking with the kids when they get a little older. We love it here.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURA ARSIE



Shannon Lefebvre and Mike Darrell (above, with their children) like the close proximity to a good school and the nearby conservation area.



The Shrams enjoy the solid build, spacious porch, and basement space for the grandkids.

Rick Shram, 69, and Karen Shram, 66

THE VERANDAS, PORT HOPE

Rick and I are both retired. I was a registered nurse and Rick worked at DuPont for 38 years. When Rick retired, we bought a two-bedroom townhouse in Whitby, but after seven years we decided we really wanted more room. We're healthy, but the thought of a home with no stairs was very appealing. After seeing an ad for The Verandas in the newspaper, we decided to go and take a look.

I knew of Geranium Homes because I had seen their other communities. Their homes are solid and very well-built. In fact, halfway into construction, we went on a hard-hat tour which confirmed our belief in the quality. The site superintendent who showed us around was very happy and proud of his work, which says a lot.

Our home is 1,650 square feet, with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a double front door and covered porch. There's also a huge basement and we'll probably furnish it with bunk beds, so the grandkids can stay over. In my kitchen I have a pantry which I love and there is more cupboard space than we've ever had before and we've lived in far larger houses. There are lots of big windows and we're getting a deck built which will look out over a soccer field, so it will be really nice to entertain outdoors.

Our children and grandchildren live in Whitby, and it's really easy to get there — less than 30 minutes' drive. Port Hope's a pretty little town and there are lots of conveniences for us. We can even walk to the grocery store and bank. I think we made the right move.

Details are key to lasting design

Geranium's resident Boaz Feiner is like an anthropologist. "We look at the way people live and how they use space when we design our homes," he explains.

Before a new community is unveiled, the company does a lot of research, assaying everything from topography to nearby amenities. "We don't hold to one set of rules; we have an approach that starts with a clean slate for each development," he says. "We then ensure our designs will meet people's requirements."

"Across our portfolio of communities, we offer homes to fit different budgets and stages of life. Providing practical use of space for today's lifestyle drives our design process," he adds.

"We like to offer open-concept kitchen and dining areas which flow into sunny great rooms. In more modest sizes the separate living room has been removed altogether. The living room isn't used in the same fashion today," notes Feiner.

Family homes at Geranium also include spacious mudrooms and loads of storage. Feiner, who has four young children himself, knows how important these details are when there are multiples of footwear, toys and sports gear.

Low maintenance is another big selling point. "People value their free time and don't want to spend it on upkeep," says Feiner.

Keeping a keen eye on the marketplace, Feiner likes to stay ahead of the curve. "As technology evolves, we incorporate the most appropriate and beneficial updates in our building practices." Energy Star® standards, high-quality construction materials and extensive warranties also play a large part in attracting buyers. "Our hard-hat tours are designed to demonstrate our construction quality, which we are very comfortable showing our clients," he explains.

"At Geranium Homes, we believe in providing our homeowners with long-term value."

Matt Ross, 28, and Rachel Ross, 31

THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF CARDINAL POINT, STOUFFVILLE

When Rachel and I got married last year, we were living in a condo in Toronto. Although we loved living in the city, we wanted more space and decided to look at houses. I'm a lawyer in Markham and, through my work, I have become very familiar with Geranium's reputation for building quality homes and great customer service.

We have friends in Stouffville, so we went to look at the model homes there. We were incredibly impressed. The layouts were flawless, the size was ideal, and we loved the neighbourhood. Given how hectic our schedules are, we were excited by the idea of purchasing a brand-new, move-in-ready home.

My wife is a business analyst and works in downtown Toronto. The GO Train station is practically around the corner from our home and it's very easy for her to get to work. The neighbourhood is full of young couples and families and we felt at home right away. Given that the house is 3,200 square feet, with four bedrooms and 3.5 bathrooms, and beautiful finishes, we believe we got incredible value for the price. Our lot backs onto a conservation area and we see the most amazing sunsets from our deck.

What we love the most about Stouffville is a strong sense of community. We're so happy here.



Rachel and Matt Ross moved into a large, luxury home within a tight-knit, family-oriented community.