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# Fitting into the neighbourhood

Infill homes resonate with landscape while offering elevated design elements for modern families



Crafthouse homes (above and below right) feature wide-open living spaces and an abundance of natural light creating a connection to the outdoors. Outside (top right) the properties are designed to complement the neighbourhood's architecture. THE SORBARA GROUP

Moving into a new neighbourhood can be tricky. For developers, it's a balancing act to retain the local character and charm, but at the same time create contemporary living spaces that serve 21st-century families.

Enter two textbook manoeuvres in two very different locations from the Sorbara Group, formerly Orchard Ridge Homes.

From chic Bayview Village low-rises to graceful lakeshore properties in Pickering, their unique developments are standing out by, well, fitting in.

Sorbara says it took care to select architects who could create a custom-home feel within a larger development yet still resonate with the local environment.

Crafthouse, a 20-home project, is located in an area renowned for its modernist heritage architecture.

Peter Vishnovsky, architect and interior designer of the project, says it's not so much about blending in, but echoing what's already in the area, with a modern twist.

"We are not so much trying to mimic our surroundings as trying to be sensitive to the neighbourhood,

its colours and proportions," says Mr. Vishnovsky, principal architect at Symbolics Architecture + Design. "We want to be individualistic but not in conflict with our surroundings. The project is contemporary, new, and a different way of looking at housing."

He looked to the houses of the 1950s and '60s to resonate some of their architectural qualities, but with more contemporary materials. For example, Mr. Vishnovsky used cladding panels made of wood to reflect the detail of early modernist housing, and translated elongated stone into elongated brick.

There are nine different designs within the complex, tied together by a contemporary aesthetic. Many are already sold. What's left starts at \$2,895,000 for 5,452 square feet.

"Some of the smaller lots have the same floor plate, but with a different façade, so we don't get this idea of repetition," explains Mr. Vishnovsky. "But it is a development, so we did not want 20 individual homes. They all share the same quality and style."

Each home has a courtyard designed for privacy, with full walls, creating

a sheltered enclave that can act as yet another room of the house.

Inside, natural light shines through soaring windows to illuminate double-volume living spaces and gallery areas.

"We wanted to capture the light to create these very comfortable spaces that are connected to the street and the amenities area," Mr. Vishnovsky says. "The layout is open plan, contemporary and modern, with simple details. The idea is to declutter the house."

In a very different setting in Pickering, where tree-lined streets lead to the lake, Sorbara's Fairwater project is guided by the same principles.

Stephen Hunt, principal of Hunt Design Associates, and the architect of Fairwater, says it retains a sense of nostalgia for the established neighbourhood, but the homes are thoroughly modern to suit today's expectations. "We don't want to erode the history and character of the community, and there are a number of ways of addressing that."

Mr. Hunt notes that Pickering was once a cottage community where an

assortment of buildings, farmhouses, cottages and summer homes lined Lake Ontario. "One of the things we tried to do was take an eclectic approach within the project so it had an organic feel. There is a lot more variety than expected. Often with larger projects," he says, "they can take over the character of a neighbourhood. We are more sensitive to that. The idea is not to have a cookie-cutter approach."

The 50-plus home development ranges from \$859,990 for a 1,906-square-foot home, to \$1,194,990 for a 4,633-square-foot property. Like Crafthouse, there are up to 10 different designs.

Mr. Hunt notes that building forms vary. "There are one-and-half-storey to two-storey homes. Some models have parking courts, covered drive-throughs or garages in the rear yard."

He says the unique approach to dealing with the car speaks to the history of the site. "We are trying to keep the streetscapes more pedestrian, rather than car-orientated."

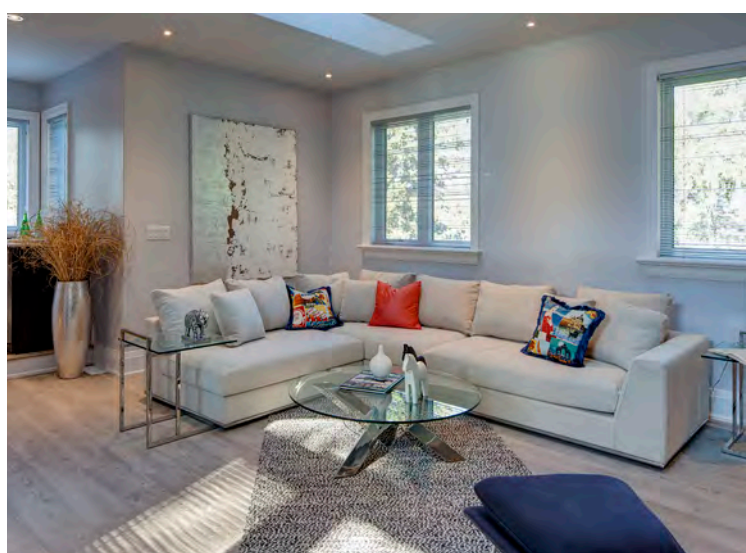
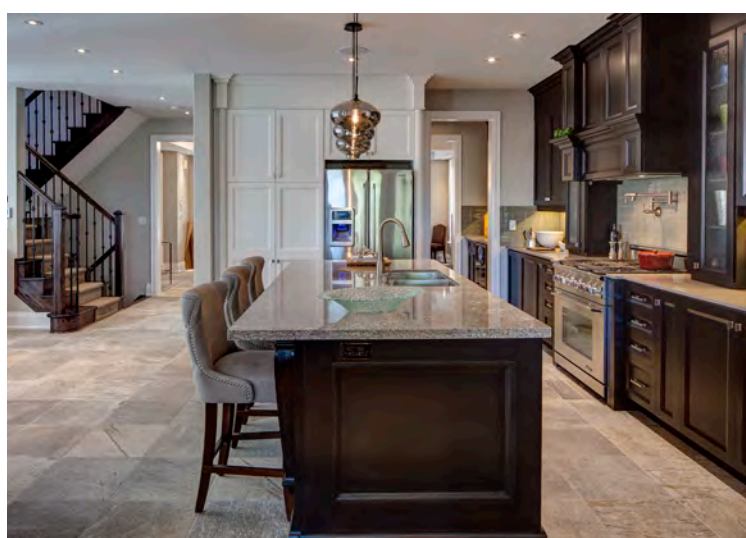
The architecture and earthy materials used also fit within the context

of the community. "Some are more cottagey-looking," Mr. Hunt says. "Others are French-country-style homes. Each home has a unique character." One of the principles of this development is to preserve as much of the natural environment as possible. That is why many of the lots preserve mature trees in the backyard.

Inside, the house is designed to enhance today's lifestyle. Spaces are flowing and open, with great natural light; the kitchen is at the heart of the home; and there are lots of bedrooms.

For Mr. Hunt, standout features are throwbacks such as coach houses, chimneys and fireplaces, and two-storey balconies offering vistas across the neighbourhood, with glimpses of the lake.

He contends that developers today are much more mindful of the needs of existing communities. "Developers are becoming more sensitive... but they also have to walk that line," he says. "Today's buyer has specific needs and a much more sophisticated lifestyle that is not provided for in old stock housing."



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**Stephen Hunt,**  
Principal architect,  
Hunt Design Associates



Located in Pickering, Sorbara's Fairwater development features traditional-looking family homes with all the conveniences for a modern family. THE SORBARA GROUP