



Homes-Extra

COVER STORY

From living room to living space



At Geranium Homes' newest community in Pickering — The Courts of South Rouge — homebuyers will find floor plans that include a main floor library/office, generous entry off the garage with plenty of room for organized storage, open concept great room/kitchen, formal dining hall and covered porch off the kitchen.

The family home is being redefined as builders offer designs that better reflect the way families interact



At Geranium Homes' site in Ballantrae, "We've really re-oriented the house to how we live today," notes Boaz Feiner, president, adding that outdoor living space is just as important as the indoors.

DIANNE DANIEL

Special to QMI Agency

If you find yourself tripping over boots, jackets, pets and – heaven forbid – even children just to get out of the house on your way to that special Family Day activity this holiday, it might be time for some 'family math.'

Not the kind of math that might stop you from having more children or inviting more guests into your home, but rather a good hard look at the square footage of your main floor living space and the percentages that tell you how it could be better used, says Boaz Feiner, Housing Division President, Geranium Corp.

"As homes become smaller and you don't have unlimited space, that use of square footage on the main floor is so important," says Feiner, pointing to a shift away from the formal living room, premium square footage Geranium Homes says makes more sense as a main floor home office and mud room/family centre.

"In a lot of homes, the percentage of main floor space dedicated to occasional rooms is still a high percentage compared to rooms we use all of the time," he explains. "I think we have to look at a redistribution of those percentages."

A father of four children aged six and under, Feiner speaks from experience. He's also become an industry forerunner, translating

everyday occurrences (like spilling coffee onto his son's homework in a chaotic entry) into ideas for better home design that more accurately reflect the way families interact.

At Geranium Homes' newest community in Pickering — The Courts of South Rouge — homebuyers will find floor plans that include a main floor library/office, generous entry off the garage with plenty of room for organized storage, open concept great room/kitchen, formal dining hall and covered porch off the kitchen. What they won't find is a living room.

"We've really re-oriented the house to how we live today," notes Feiner, adding that outdoor living space is just as important as the indoors. Another important feature is

"the separation of clean and dirty" by moving the laundry area from the mud room to the second floor. "... I believe that as people become more accepting of it, this is where the norm is going to go," he says.

Hugh Heron, President of Heathwood Homes and Heron Homes, says one of the biggest changes over the past 40 years is the move to open concept living spaces. "I came to Canada in 1967 and in those days ... each room was delineated by a mahogany door and everybody closed their doors," he recalls.

Not only are families removing doors (except where it makes sense for privacy), but they also aim to keep walls to a minimum. Whereas homeowners used to be preoccupied with hiding dirty dishes,

today they want to be part of the action, talking to guests in the great room even while preparing food or cleaning up. There's also more of a chance for interaction with kids if they can't hide behind doors, points out Heron.

"Having the open concept on the ground floor means there's opportunity for chatter," he says.

Trends that are fading when it comes to family home design include the theatre room, which both Heron and Feiner say is now passé, and the second floor computer niche. Features that remain a must-have are the main floor powder room, full ensuite bathroom and pleasing streetscape.