

Cardinal Point

The family unit

When Neil Kshatri bought a townhome in a Cardinal Point neighbourhood, his parents, following in *his* footsteps, moved into a bungalow down the street

Neil Kshatri liked his two-storey townhouse and Cardinal Point neighbourhood in Stouffville so much that he persuaded his parents to purchase a bungalow close by.

It was three years ago when the 35-year-old single entrepreneur moved from Markham to this vibrant community in the gently rolling hills of Whitchurch-Stouffville, just northeast of Toronto. Unlike other GTA bedroom enclaves uniformly dotted with large lawn-fronted single-family houses, Geranium Corporation's Cardinal Point embraced Whitchurch-Stouffville's concept of diversity and density and built a neighbourhood that welcomes a wide range of home buyers.

Geranium helped plant the seeds of housing diversity by introducing townhomes, condominiums and bungalows into the mix. Cardinal Point on the town's northwest border has blossomed, offering numerous well-designed home options that have been attracting a variety of buyers drawn to Stouffville's peace and quiet, as well as its walkability and amenities.

"Stouffville today is like Markham was 20 years ago," says Kshatri, comparing his current neighbourhood to the bustling city in York Region where he was born and raised. "You don't get the same kind of 'town' feel in many places anymore, but Stouffville has kept that."

Now in its fifth phase, The Neighbourhoods of Cardinal Point introduced a collection of three- and four-bedroom detached homes starting at \$579,900. Soon to be released is a new phase of loft-inspired condominium townhomes in Cardinal Point — Uptownes — with prices starting from the high \$390,000s.

Meanwhile, Kshatri loves the layout of his townhouse and especially appreciates the conveniences afforded by the design. As well, he took note of Cardinal Point's earlier phases, which also featured these well-designed compact homes geared to young couples, singles and empty nesters. And when his parents, who were living in Markham, made the decision to downsize, Kshatri recommended his neighbourhood. Last year, they moved into a bungalow down the street from his townhome.

"I would have never recommended Cardinal Point to my parents if it wasn't excellent," says Kshatri.

His parents had been looking specifically for a bungalow for three years before finding what they wanted in Cardinal Point. They wanted a quiet community without traffic congestion, a place where they can entertain family and friends. "Over the years I had purchased two brand-new homes before this one," said Manu Kshatri, Neil's father. "This is by far the best." He was also impressed with Geranium's superior-quality construction standards for electrical, structural and plumbing elements.

This commitment to quality, design and cus-



Neil Kshatri, centre, and his parents value the design and high quality of their Stouffville homes.

tomers outreach has helped make Geranium one of the top builders in Canada. As well, over the past 15 years, Geranium has built a special relationship with Whitchurch-Stouffville, as the company evolved, from building homes to assembling and developing land, beginning with The Neighbourhoods of Cardinal Point master-planned community, set against 40 acres of preserved natural ravine.

In 2011, Geranium recognized that a key segment of the new-home buying market was looking for larger homes on expansive lots. The company undertook an extensive architectural design process to create Forest Trail Estates, an award-winning series of manor homes on lots of approximately 1 acre, nestled against the Oak Ridges Moraine in Ballantrae.

The popularity of this estate neighbourhood in Whitchurch-Stouffville, where only a handful of homes remains, has prompted Geranium to plan Copperstone. Situated just a stone's throw north along Highway 48 from Forest Trail Estates, this new enclave of 18 lots will be released for sale by fall.

Always ahead of the game, in 2006, when provincial regulations compelled new suburban housing to incorporate more density and reduce land use, Geranium was "already focused on how density could be done well," says Boaz Feiner, president of Geranium's housing division. "It really comes down to good design. That includes a commitment to pedestrian-friendly streets where people want to live."

Geranium also offers new home features that maximize square footage. For starters, Feiner says he cannot remember when the company built a home that had a galley kitchen or a computer nook.

"We want people to be able to use the footprint of their entire house," Feiner explains. "We allocate more of the home to the family area, where people spend their time."

And with the population of Whitchurch-Stouffville predicted to grow to 60,000 by 2031, Geranium continues to work closely with local officials, creating lively, mixed-use communities that make the town stand out from other Greater Toronto suburbs.

Did you know?

Whitchurch-Stouffville in York Region sits amid rolling hills and pretty kettle lakes — a setting that is among the most picturesque in the GTA. Located just east of Hwy. 404, the town is easy to get to by car. Or take a commuter train or bus — two local GO Transit stations are connected to downtown Toronto's Union Station via Markham and Scarborough.

With its small-town charm and urban amenities, Whitchurch-Stouffville has plenty to offer local residents. Here are a few:

- One of the oldest towns in the area, it was incorporated in 1792, one year before York (now known as Toronto).
- Spanning about 2.5 km from end to end, the town site's footprint remains small compared to its neighbours, making it ideal to walk along the historic and vibrant Main Street.
- Two modern arenas with two National Hockey League-sized ice pads have recently opened.
- The Whitchurch-Stouffville Leisure Centre has health, fitness and swimming facilities.
- A longtime destination for avid golfers, the town has no less than nine golf and country clubs, including Ballantrae, Meadowbrook and St. Andrews East.
- Nature enthusiasts can enjoy the hiking and biking trails crisscrossing Oak Ridges Moraine, which includes three conservation areas with trails connected to neighbouring parks.
- Currently being developed is an urban trail network leading from the centre of town to mature forests on the outskirts.
- In 2009 the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment — aka "19 on the Park" — opened, providing a venue for drama, film, music and fine art, as well as a forum for community events, festivals and youth camps.
- A wide range of after-school programs is available at the local public library, complementing the town's numerous schools — public, private, Catholic and Montessori.
- On Canada Day weekend, the Stouffville Strawberry Festival provides an opportunity for families to celebrate the region's agricultural roots.
- Open every Thursday, from May to October, the Stouffville farmers market highlights fresh local produce and culinary treats.

How to build a strong community

Use equal parts: town officials, residents and Geranium Homes

Whitchurch-Stouffville is all grown up, but not in the same way as other suburban enclaves in York Region.

Located about 50 kilometres northeast of downtown Toronto, this town of forested ravine land and kettle lakes never experienced the explosive — and, some say, poorly planned — growth of other 905 suburbs. In a lot of ways, it learned from those mistakes.

An agricultural hub through much of its history, Whitchurch-Stouffville is situated near the Oak Ridges Moraine and surrounded by working farms. Because of this, infrastructure for water and other facilities was slower to take root.

The one exception has been GO Transit service, which has two stops in the town.

In 2005 the provincial government passed two statutes — the *Places to Grow Act* and the *Greenbelt Protection Act* — compelling GTA suburbs to rein in residential development to designated areas. In addition, new housing was to incorporate more mixed-use features to provide increased housing density close to public transit and to make communities more pedestrian-friendly.

Many suburbs resisted, but Whitchurch-Stouffville was ready. Starting in 2002, Wayne Emmerson, its long-time mayor, launched an extensive urban planning initiative to guide the town's growth up to 2031.

"The important thing was that we were able to do it in phases. We didn't leapfrog all over the place," says Emmerson. "There were some concerns about how fast we were going to grow."



Collaboration between public and private sectors is necessary to build a sustainable community.

Residential developer Geranium Corporation has deep roots in Whitchurch-Stouffville. The company worked closely with the mayor and local officials to ensure that Geranium's plans for new housing will fit with the municipality's vision of less sprawl, and more townhomes and bungalows, with more public amenities to complement them, such as schools, parks and small retail shops.

"What really worked well was how Whitchurch-Stouffville embraced Places to Grow," says Cheryl Shindruk, Geranium's executive vice-president of development. "It wasn't that way with a lot of municipalities. Whitchurch-Stouffville really got out ahead

of the legislation."

Geranium is always looking to make the town better, notes Emmerson. "They bring a good plan to the table. They see what amenities we need and what the market will bear."

Emmerson isn't one to just talk about more sustainable and diverse urban development. He walks the walk. He and his wife now live in a Stouffville townhouse after downsizing from a more traditional home.

"We as developers are trying to keep up with town officials," says Boaz Feiner, president of Geranium's housing division. "Mayor Emmerson loves Stouffville and he wants to leave it a better place."