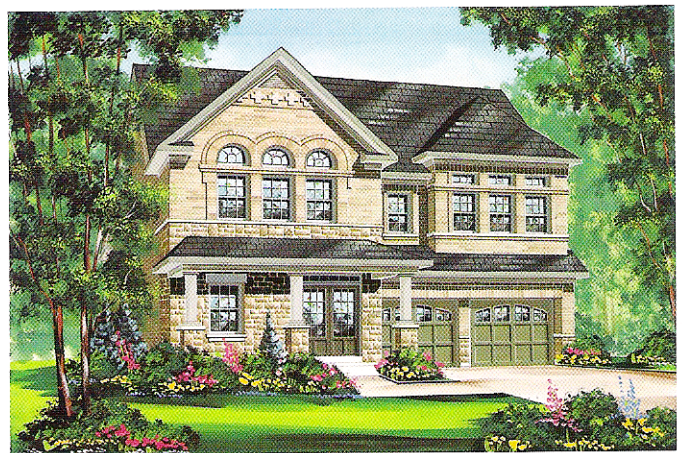


New Suburbia

Goodbye cookie-cutter houses. Unionville's upscale development offers a wide variety of homes tailor-made for each family's needs. Think open-concept living, a bathroom for every bedroom, double garages — and a big backyard

BY SIMONE OLIVERO

RIGHT: Paradise Homes' 42-foot lots, such as the 2,950-square-foot Acadia, start at \$930,000.
 FAR RIGHT: Fieldgate Homes' 42-foot lots, such as the 3,300-square-foot Springwood, start at \$910,000.



An amazing calm begins to settle over you as you drive out of the city. Towering high-rises become few and far between, and packed streets give way to parks, golf courses and ravines. The weathered spires of historic churches stand tall amid spacious family homes, both old and new, and in a quaint village a commercial strip buzzes with shops and cafés. This is Unionville, a quiet stretch of Markham on the northern edge of the GTA. And it has more than a few downtowners wondering if city living is all it's cracked up to be.

They might wonder because of places such as Upper Unionville, the village's most ambitious community development project. Just above 16th Avenue, the two-phase site — dubbed New U — is the result of a partnership among TACC Developments, Arista, Paradise, Starlane and Fieldgate.

What sets New U apart from other subdivisions is its architectural variety. With each developer building homes in myriad styles — all of which can be upgraded and customized — the neighbourhood won't end up looking like the cookie-cutter suburbia many city dwellers want to avoid.

A 42-foot detached option starts at \$800,000, for example, and includes 3,000 square feet of living space,

with nine-foot ceilings on two floors, four bedrooms, four bathrooms, a kitchen with eat-in dining space, a double garage, unfinished basement and — that urban fantasy — a yard. "This subdivision is built with the modern family in mind," says Daniel Salerno, Paradise Home's director of sales and marketing. "We've traded traditional room set-ups for open-concept spaces that emphasize family time."

As part of the development, a brand new elementary school is slated to open in 2014, and the walkable Berezy Square plaza is under construction. Unionville's charming Main Street is also nearby, with boutiques, cafés and the Varley Art Gallery's impressive Group of Seven collection. And for those who still need city amenities close at hand, downtown Markham is just a few blocks away, with everything from Whole Foods to LEED-certified high-rises.

But perhaps New U's real allure is the sum of its parts: the green space, the good schools, the family-oriented community that doesn't sacrifice convenience. Here you can have a luxury home, a backyard and still be a short drive (or GO train ride) away from the downtown core — or adventures further north. After all, if you're going to leave the city, you might as well feel as though you've arrived somewhere completely different. **A**