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Trends are always a popular topic with home owners, whether it's about the style and decor inside a home or what consumers are looking for in the design of their new home. Yet the new home and renovation industry does not dictate design trends, rather great design actually comes up from the market. For instance, what appears to be nostalgia - such as the Craftsman and Victorian designs of some suburban neighbourhoods - is simply a reflection of a consumer's continuing search for security, comfort and value. Knowing the pulse of the consumer, anticipating what will sell two or even three years out - and the equally important ability to recognize and reject shallow trends - is important to our industry's success.

Another example is the changing needs of today's family. Whether a household is dual income or simply that the family lifestyle is a busy one with demands on time, more and more families own two cars. That changes how the industry builds homes as even those without children find they need the space of a two car garage. Even semi-detached homes are being built on larger lots to accommodate room for a driveway and wider garage.

A customer's desire cannot always be realistically met. In a recent survey conducted by TD Bank, a majority of Canadians who just bought or were about to buy their first home preferred newer and detached homes over older and semi-detached homes or condos. Considering that nine out of ten of those surveyed took out or expected to take out a mortgage for their home, it's also important to be realistic about what you can afford.

Another overriding trend, which will dictate home building and design for years to come, is the restrictions on land development and subsequent rising land costs. Intense densification is a reality as the cost of serviced land will increase pressure to build more high-rise condos and low-rise town homes rather than tracts of single-family houses on wide streets. And as an industry we adapt. We find ourselves no longer building homes but creating neighbourhoods.

Yet the single most important trend that will affect the home buyer and renovation marketplace is our changing demographics, such as more people entering retirement with the biggest issue being the choice between downsizing to a smaller home or condo or remaining in your home and renovating as needed.

In June 2010, the Region of Waterloo, in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), hosted a successful one-day event entitled "The Past is NOT the Future: Housing Choice and Demographic Change" that explored the implications of changing demographics, lifestyle choices and opportunities for people as they move through the housing continuum.

## **Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association**

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Over 100 people attended the event including a wide range of elected officials, housing and social planners, public health professionals and members of the WRHBA.

There were several objectives for this forum including an opportunity for participants to receive new information related to forecasting and demographic trends, that could influence future thinking and decision making, and a forum for discussion amongst participants with different perspectives and areas of expertise. There is still a great deal of discussion between the stakeholders in our region, and the WRHBA is counted among them, over how the information can be interpreted and what it means to our region, but we all have the desired end result of meeting the needs of our growing community.

In my next article, I'll explore the exciting decorating and design trends that you'll find inside your home.

WRHBA is a network of professionals who effectively manage industry issues across the region including the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich. WRHBA is actively involved in all facets of the new home construction and residential renovation industries. It is a voluntary association whose primary goal is to positively impact the communities where their members and their customers live, work and play. WRHBA encourages innovations and excellence in the planning and building of sustainable communities and in the redevelopment and renovation of existing communities. WRHBA works with government at all levels to establish fair and effective policies that impact the building and development industry and its customers. WRHBA regularly facilitates discussions between the industry and the federal, provincial, regional and local governments with respect to issues that affect development, building, and home ownership in Waterloo Region. Through ongoing representation to Municipal and Regional government, media relations and consumer education, WRHBA addresses important issues head on and have a strong presence that benefits members and contributes to housing affordability and the well-being of communities in the Region of Waterloo.

Visit [www.wrhiba.com](http://www.wrhiba.com) for further association information.

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