



BUILDING YOUR Dream Home...

Building homes that offer comfort, practicality
and beauty for years to come

Written By Trilby Henderson Photography By Kim Digney

When Loran and Rina Schalk decided to build a new house, they knew that finding the right homebuilder was key to creating the home they wanted. The couple spent a year interviewing potential builders, but it wasn't long after meeting with Garry and Lorena Sawchyn, owners of Emerald Park Homes, that they knew their search for the right homebuilder was over and the next step in the process could begin.

"We didn't want the builder's palette," says Rina. "We wanted our palette and to work with a builder who could do that for us. That's what we found in Emerald Park Homes."

There were several reasons why the Schalks chose to work with Emerald Park Homes. For one, Loran says they were impressed with the fact that Garry took the time to ask them relevant questions during the interview process and made it a priority to get to know their family and their needs. In fact, many of Garry's questions led the couple to think about aspects of their new home that they hadn't yet considered.

"We understand that a family has different needs at different points during the growth of the family, so we tried to find out what this family had planned for the future," says Garry.



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Although the couple had concrete ideas of what they wanted, they valued Garry’s willingness to provide suggestions based on his experience, to guide them toward options that would better suit their wants and needs. “We went through so many options until we found what worked for us,” Loran says. Rina says Garry went above and beyond to secure the lot the couple wanted—a coveted north-facing corner lot in the Fairway area that backs on to the Aspen Links Country Club golf course. The Schalks chose the lot for a number of reasons, key of which were its close vicinity to the golf course and Emerald Park’s walking paths.

What they found after moving in was that the area is home to a very friendly, active community. Located just 10 minutes east of Regina, White City and Emerald Park offer residents an abundance of opportunity to enjoy an active lifestyle in a safe, family-friendly environment. “The people here are fabulous. We’ve been here for four months, three of which have been in minus-30 weather, and we’ve met more people here than we did in 10 years at our other home,” says Loran. “You get a small-town feel out here, but you’re still close enough to the big city that you get the best of both worlds.”

Three things key to new home

Rina says there were three things the couple was sure of before they began designing their new house: they wanted all closets to be walk-in, a large garage and a workout room. All three features have been incorporated into the Schalks’ two-story, four-bedroom home, which boasts more than 3,600 square feet of developed living space and a five-car garage big enough to accommodate the family’s vehicles and provide Loran with a large workshop area.

“When we designed the new house, we decided to take what we used in the old house and enlarge it here, and take what we didn’t use and shrink it,” says Loran. This led the couple to create a large walk-in closet at their home’s entrance, with plenty of room to accommodate the family’s coats, shoes and even sports equipment. Other than the main-floor bathroom and laundry room, the rest of the area is entirely open and encompasses a living room, dining area and large kitchen. >>

A hands-on builder

The Schalks enjoyed being able to work directly with Garry and Lorena, rather than dealing with a salesman. They also appreciated Garry’s direct approach to the business and were confident knowing that he would be on-site to make sure each aspect of the project was done right. “He’s not an administrative man,” says Loran. “He’s hands-on, so he knows what’s going on 100 percent of the time with the build.”



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Loran and Rina opted for extra-deep custom cabinets constructed of solid ebony, a black-hued wood not typically used for such purposes. The couple had wanted the four-foot piece at the end of the island curved to match the arc of the granite countertop. Although others had told them this was not possible, Emerald Park Homes and its contractors found a way to make it happen.

Rina says the kitchen was a focal point for the family in their former home and they wanted to capitalize on the space in the new house. "This is where we congregate everyday, with our kids, with our family, with our friends," says Rina. "It was important for it to be big and open." The Schalks chose to place the kitchen at the back of the house, with plenty of feature windows to take advantage of the natural light and stunning view of the golf course.

The finished room is a composite of multiple drawings and pictures the Schalks presented to Emerald Park Homes at the start of the project, with specific features tweaked to better suit the family. The room was designed around the large 13-by-five-foot island, complete with a bold River Rock granite countertop. The couple chose to forego upper cabinetry in favour of a large window and, instead, optimized the island space by installing plenty of hidden storage. The abundance of natural light in the main living space gave the designer for Emerald Park Homes the opportunity to use the rich color palette the Schalks were after, without worrying about the room appearing dark or closed in.

Loran says the countertop provided the inspiration for the color palette carried throughout the rest of the space. His company, Regina-based CNG Stone Products Ltd., completed stone work in the home, including the sprawling granite island, quartz vanities, and concrete valets. His experience working in the industry, and his role as a contractor with his own home's construction, gave Loran a unique perspective on the building process that most new homeowners don't have. It also enabled him to witness Garry's skill and leadership from a contractor's point of view. "Garry is hard to work for because he demands perfection, and that's one of the reasons we chose him," he says.

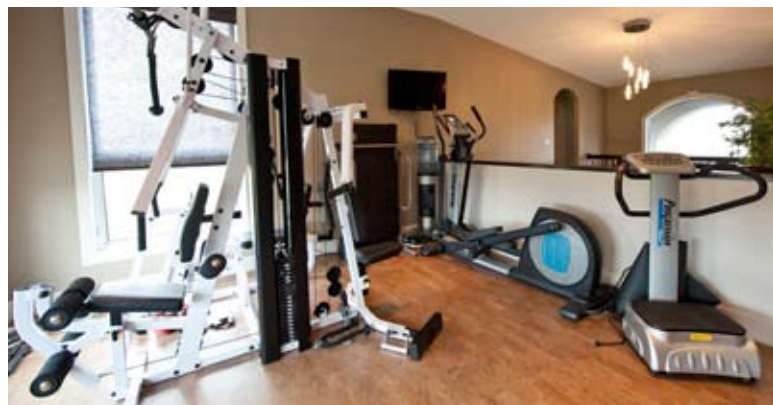
Staircase a showpiece

One of the Schalks' favourite features of the house is the wide, open, custom-designed staircase that extends from the second level to the basement. Loran describes the staircase as a showpiece, noting the contractor spent weeks perfecting it.

On the second level, the staircase opens to the Schalks' workout room—their favourite space in the home. The 10-foot-high ceilings and expansive windows give the room a bright, airy feel and provide a gorgeous view of the golf course below, and the cork flooring in the room is both comfortable and well-suited for the family's workout equipment. "It's the nicest room in the house," says Loran.

He says Garry helped them to design the space so that it could be split into an office and a bedroom, should the couple's needs change in the future. In fact, all of the behind-the-scenes construction is in place to allow for two additional walls to easily be installed to form the two new rooms. On the right side of the upper level, a step down leads to the guest suite, including both a bedroom and bathroom. The area was designed to give guests a sense of privacy and departure from the rest of the house, and the Schalks had a separate thermostat installed to give guests further control over their personal comfort.

On the other side of the workout room lies the master bedroom, with a coffered ceiling and remote-control lighting. Inside, wood-trimmed sliding doors open to reveal the en-suite bathroom, with highlights including the River Rock shower floor, quartz countertops and individualized walk-in closets for both Rina and Loran.



The back wall in Rina’s closet is curved to allow her clothes to fan out, making it easier to find what she is looking for. The curve in the closet is carried through to the hallway on the other side, and then mirrored in the curve of the floor surrounding the stairwell on the second and main levels. The raised basement is currently the domain of the Schalks’ twin daughters; the area includes a large living space with four-foot-tall windows to allow in plenty of light, a bathroom, and two bedrooms, complete with walk-in closets. Loran says the basement was designed so that it can be transformed into a more adult space once the girls leave home.

Future plans

Future plans include opening one of the twins bedrooms to the living room to create a large recreation area, turning the walk-in closet into a wet bar, and replacing the bedroom window with patio doors to create a basement walk-out. “With a few minor modifications, the basement shifts from a living space for the children to a play space for the adults,” he says.

In addition to their open working relationship with Garry and Lorena, the couple liked being able to visit their home during construction to speak with each of the individual contractors.

Loran says, like Garry, the contractors were ready to offer their expert opinions, but always respected the decisions made by the couple even if it went against what the contractor suggested. “Meeting each individual contractor and getting their take on what we were doing here was invaluable,” says Loran. “They are all fabulous people and I think one of the reasons Garry is a good builder is because he surrounds himself with good people. That’s important.”

“We see many people today looking for a unique home that stands out, yet remains welcoming and respectful of the community,” says Garry. “They want homes that are modest in size, but with abundant qualities that embrace the family’s lifestyle and leave them with room to grow and change. They want their homes to be comfortable, practical and affordable, and built with care using quality materials that give the home lasting value and timeless appeal. Custom-built homes afford comfort, practicality and beauty for years to come.”

For the Schalks, finding a homebuilder who enabled them to customize their new house down to the last detail has made all the difference. “Garry found unique solutions to our requests,” said Loran. **fhr**

“This house describes us. As a couple. As a family.”

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