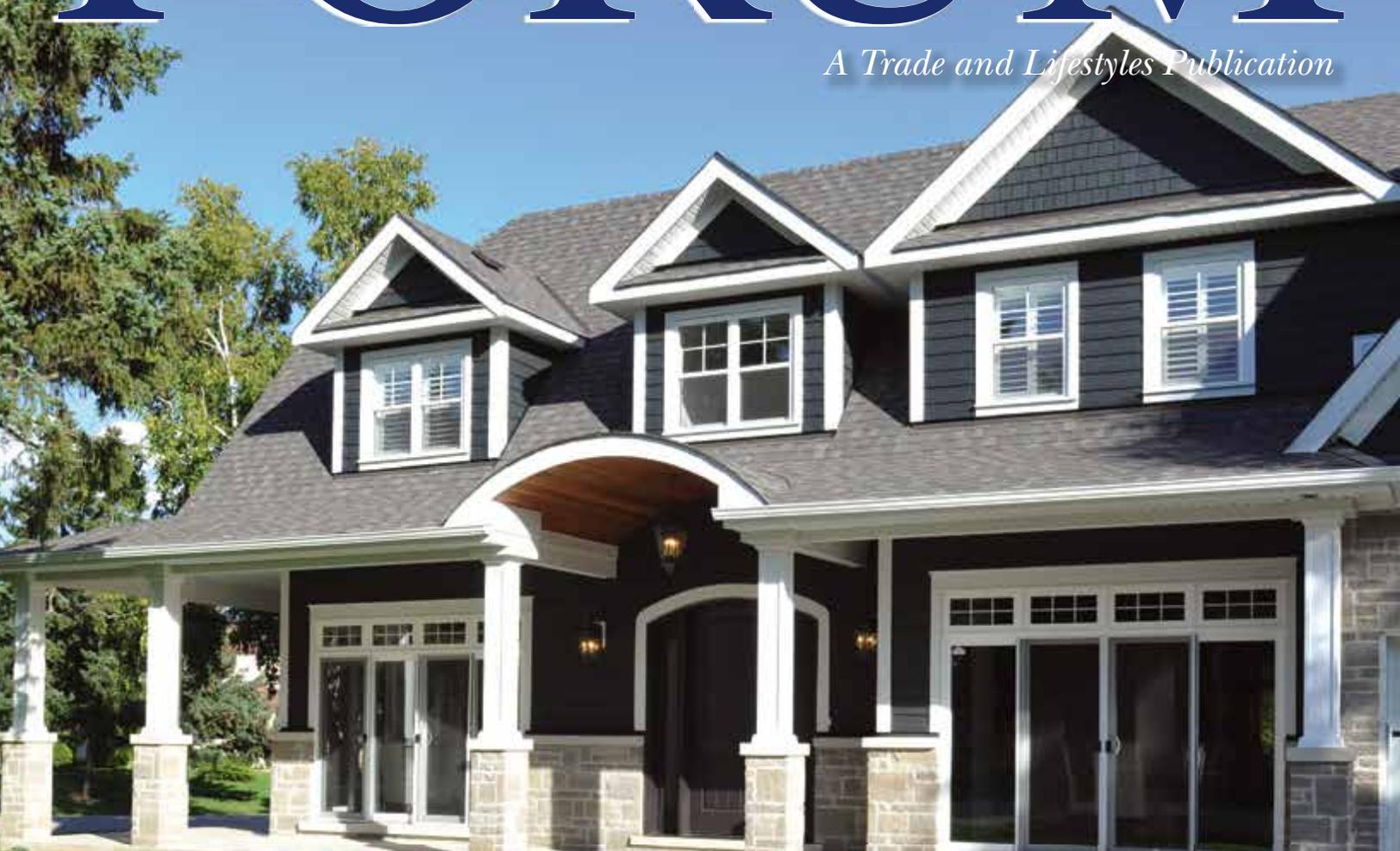


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Stonemill Developments Inc. Design Build

Where Everything Is About You

by John Reynolds



What's the difference between a house and a home? How about this: A house is shelter and a home is an expression of the owners' lifestyle, a reflection of its location and environment and, incidentally, just about the best tax-free investment a Canadian can make.

Paul Ribau should know. He began his business career in banking, working with homebuilders. Much of his time was spent at home construction sites, inspecting the progress before advancing funds to the builders. "I really enjoyed getting out of the office to go to those sites," Paul says with a smile. "Being out there with the sun on my face, the smell of sawdust in the air, and mud on my banker's shoes really appealed to me."

When the trust company that employed Paul merged with a large bank, Paul decided to change his career path and pursue his strong interest and gained knowledge in the construction industry.



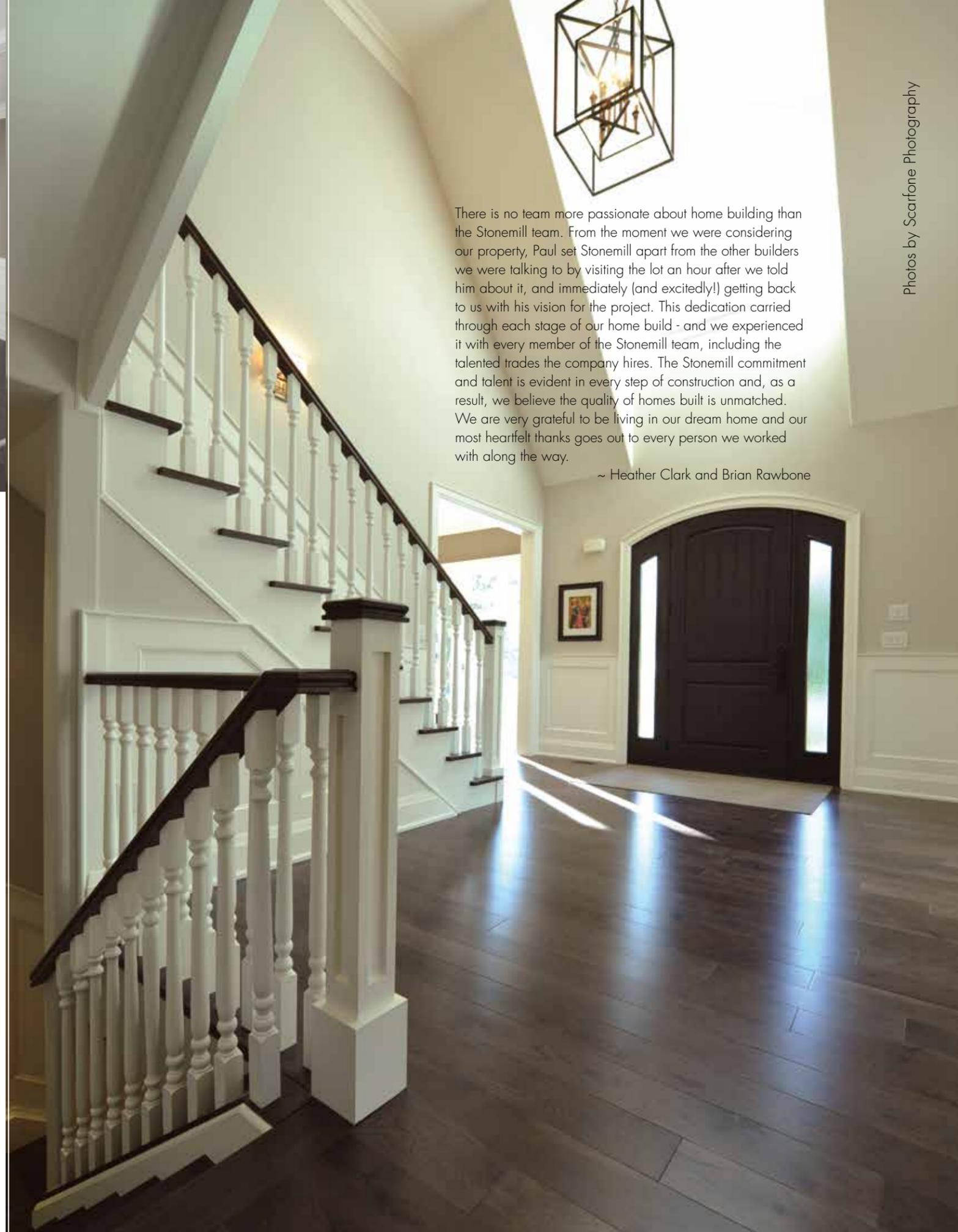
It was then that he approached, Tony Mazzaferro and Frank Mazzaferro, whom had over 15 years combined experience in the building business ranging from carpentry to plumbing. Their knowledge and experience was a trusted and integral part of the growth of Stonemill.

Paul, Tony and Frank shared the vision of a company that would build homes meeting the needs of modern family life. The company would also stress the importance of quality in every project that carried its name. Thus Oakville-based Stonemill Developments Inc. and Stonemill Realty Inc. were born, providing Design Build and Real Estate services all under one roof.

The partners' ambitions extended beyond building new homes. First,

their company would build homes that reflected each owner's individual taste and needs, and that represented the highest level of design quality and building skills. Next, it wouldn't build homes "on spec" for some unknown buyer; Stonemill homes would be truly custom-built in close co-operation with the client at every stage. Finally, the new company would incorporate a realtor's role in the process.

"I had seen situations where homebuilders were fighting the location instead of integrating it into the experience of living in the home," Paul explains. "If a location has a spectacular view, the new home should be positioned and designed to make the most of it. Or if a buyer has a specific idea of the home they want, we should be able to find a building lot



There is no team more passionate about home building than the Stonemill team. From the moment we were considering our property, Paul set Stonemill apart from the other builders we were talking to by visiting the lot an hour after we told him about it, and immediately (and excitedly!) getting back to us with his vision for the project. This dedication carried through each stage of our home build - and we experienced it with every member of the Stonemill team, including the talented trades the company hires. The Stonemill commitment and talent is evident in every step of construction and, as a result, we believe the quality of homes built is unmatched. We are very grateful to be living in our dream home and our most heartfelt thanks goes out to every person we worked with along the way.

~ Heather Clark and Brian Rawbone

Photos by Scarfone Photography

that makes the most of it.”

Paul’s solution was to create a real estate arm to locate ideal lots and connect potential custom homebuyers with the builder they needed – which, of course, would be Stonemill.

He already had a head start. His father’s passing at a young age fuelled a new resolve to succeed, and during his first year in University, obtained his Real Estate Licence and managed to

combine studies and work. Not long after, Paul launched his own Brokerage, Stonemill Realty Inc. in 1999, and today employs 21 agents.

“Our Agents give us an enormous advantage when dealing with clients who have a particular home design in mind and want to make the most of it,” Paul says. “For example, they are familiar with zoning by-laws, where the setbacks must be, the maximum square footage allowance for a specific lot, and

the available lots that can make the most of the buyer’s chosen design.”

Balancing the real estate knowledge of Stonemill agents is the expertise of Brenda Baranowski, the company’s Director of Client Services, and Kristjan Fortune, the firm’s Senior Architectural Designer. Kristjan is the client’s first introduction to Stonemill’s focus on creating a home designed specifically for them. Almost every design begins with an in-home consultation where Kristjan learns about the clients’ needs, who they are, how they live, and their expectations. He uses this information to create a “dream list” combining zoning and by-law data leading first to a plan and later to a 3D presentation. The presentation enables clients to walk through the house before it is built. Once general approval is obtained, Kristjan and the clients work side by side to finalize each room. When the plans are finalized, Stonemill takes care of all the structural information needed to obtain building permits and begin turning the dream into reality.

At this point, Brenda Baranowski becomes the primary contact between the Client and Stonemill. “I think we go into more detail than other custom home builders,” Brenda says. “We’ll do drive-bys of existing Stonemill homes to show how designs and materials



This combination of talent and the implementation of an online interactive customer service program has propelled Stonemill to a new level utilizing modern technology. Their efforts not only pay off for clients with a more attractive and liveable home, but with significant savings in space and cost.

“We can design and build a 3,500 square foot home that has all the appeal and liveability of a 4,500 square feet home,” Paul says. “So why pay for a one-hundred-foot lot, plus taxes, heat and other expenses, just to accommodate that extra thousand square feet?”

Each stage of a project brings another opportunity for clients to shape their home according to their unique taste and needs.

The secret, Paul explains, begins with an open concept design that eliminates hallways while emphasizing attractive sight lines throughout the home and smooth traffic flow from kitchen to family room and patio. Out of this approach has come the Bungalow concept with primary living space, including master suite with opulent finishes and personal touches, on the ground floor, and two bedrooms in the loft area. Luxury extends to features such as ten-foot ceiling heights and similar highlights.

The Bungalow concept makes enormous sense to couples whose children have left home for university or are living elsewhere. Bedrooms are available for them and for other guests, but on a more compact scale. Paul Ribau and his staff are discovering that many people, especially in the Oakville-Burlington area, are realizing that their 5,000+ square foot homes



look, and I'll take them to homes we have under construction to check a certain colour on the walls. The whole exercise is to help our clients visualize the overall look.”

Each stage of a project brings another opportunity for clients to shape their home according to their unique taste and needs.

“When the walls are framed, for example,” Brenda says, “we schedule

a walk-through to fix the location of all the electrical installations. Not just where the lights go, but where each outlet is, where wall switches will be placed, and the lights each switch will control. We even have the client tell us the best height for the wall switches, according to their choice.” Brenda’s attention to detail and material selections and arrangements ensures that the client’s vision is truly realized, and that they receive quality and performance at an affordable price.

“We’re actually ‘feeling the house’ at that point,” Paul points out. “The clients begin to sense what it will be like to live in their new home, even at that early stage, and we maintain this approach through the building process.” Stonemill supports this personal experience with its customized web-based program that enables each client to review and monitor design and construction aspects of their home via the Stonemill website.





are an unnecessary extravagance.

“They can choose a new home that’s more compact by 2,000 or more square feet, with all the comfort, luxury and convenience of a custom-built home, and not give up a thing, owning your own home, especially one with elegant

design features, remains one of the smartest investments Canadians can make.” Paul explains.

And with Paul’s financial experience and background he is able to lead the clients with confidence and offer peace of mind to make the right decision.

“I can find you a good building lot for, say, \$700,000,” he says, “build you a custom home for the same amount, and when it’s finished, your bank will assess it at \$1.6 million, or \$200,000 more than it cost you. I don’t know any other investment that can generate an immediate \$200,000 tax-free profit.”



Of course, it’s not about money where elegant custom homes are concerned. It’s about appeal, satisfaction and fun (“It *has* to be fun for the client,” Brenda Baranowski emphasizes) of seeing a dream take shape before your eyes.

Like all dreams, custom homes are all about the dreamer. And, if you are fortunate enough to choose a Stonemill custom home, this means it’s all about you.

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