



# NEWHOMEGUIDE

GTA Edition

Your Best Source for New Homes

//INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

## Getting to know your builder

» by HUGH HERON



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**In the 101 things to consider when you are looking at buying a new home, make sure the reputations of the builders you are considering is toward the top of your list.** You have to do your homework before you make what will probably be one of the biggest financial investments of your life. Now that the Internet is such a big part of our lives, checking on a builder's history and track record is easier than ever before. It should also be an important factor in your final decision.

You will find a lot of information on builders' websites about their histories, awards and past and current communities. You can also visit Tarion Warranty Corp. at [tarion.com](http://tarion.com) to research builders' track record with the warranty program. Has Tarion had to resort to conciliations (onsite inspections by a qualified warranty representative to resolve a dispute between builder and homeowner)? The point is, you can do this online.

When I started in the business decades ago, people relied mostly on word-of-mouth, and you know, that strategy is still effective today. I suggest you drive through completed neighbourhoods, take a good look at how

everything came together. Are the homes and streetscapes beautiful? Have they aged well? Did the builder give careful thought to exterior designs and colours?

Then go and knock on doors and ask how the owners felt about their purchase experience. If they're happy, they will be glad to tell you, and if they're not, believe me, they'll be even more anxious to share their stories with you. Just be sure to place it in a realistic context. Every builder today faces challenges with labour and material shortages, unexpected delays with municipal approvals, and even good builders make occasional mistakes. It's the nature of this business. But responsible, reliable builders will make their homeowners aware of shortfalls, and will do everything possible to amend the situation.

Oh, and speaking of word-of-mouth, you can also connect with other buyers on social networking sites – but again, weigh the pros and cons of this carefully. Just because something is online does not guarantee it's factual. Good or bad, take it with a grain of salt and turn to other resources for your research as well.

Another thing – avoid getting carried away when you're standing in the sales office looking at inviting renderings and tempting floorplans. You may even have a beautiful model home to tour. Most likely, the community and homes are fine, but a builder can promise anything. Find out for yourself that the claims are true. If you have any questions, ask the sales representatives, who should be eager and willing to answer them, or to find out from the appropriate sources if they don't know. You can even approach the building department in the municipality you're thinking of living in and find out whether the builder's plans for the community are being accurately represented.

Keep this in mind, too: if you haven't looked into the builder's reputation, what else might you be overlooking that may cause you to regret your decision? Far too often in the past, I've encountered homeowners who become educated about their homes and builders after buying, when it was too late to choose another course.

Fortunately, this scenario is changing. I used to say that people spend more time picking out a pair of shoes than they do buying a home – but no more. People are doing their homework, and at Heathwood Homes, there's nothing we like better than helping educated consumers buy the home that will make them happy.

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