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[page 62]

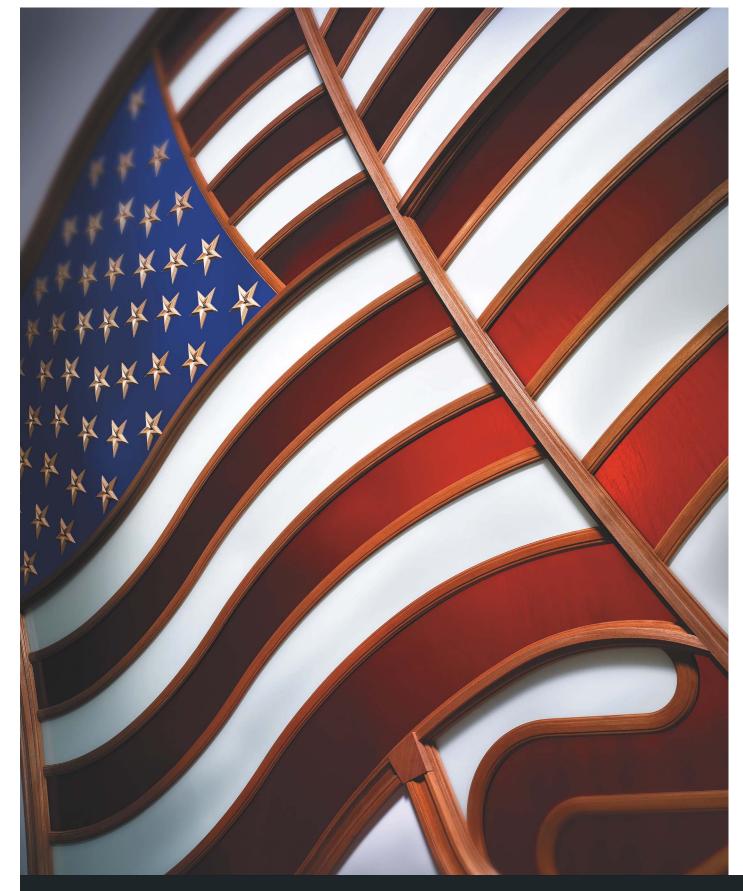
kitchen.

[page 180]

[page 201]



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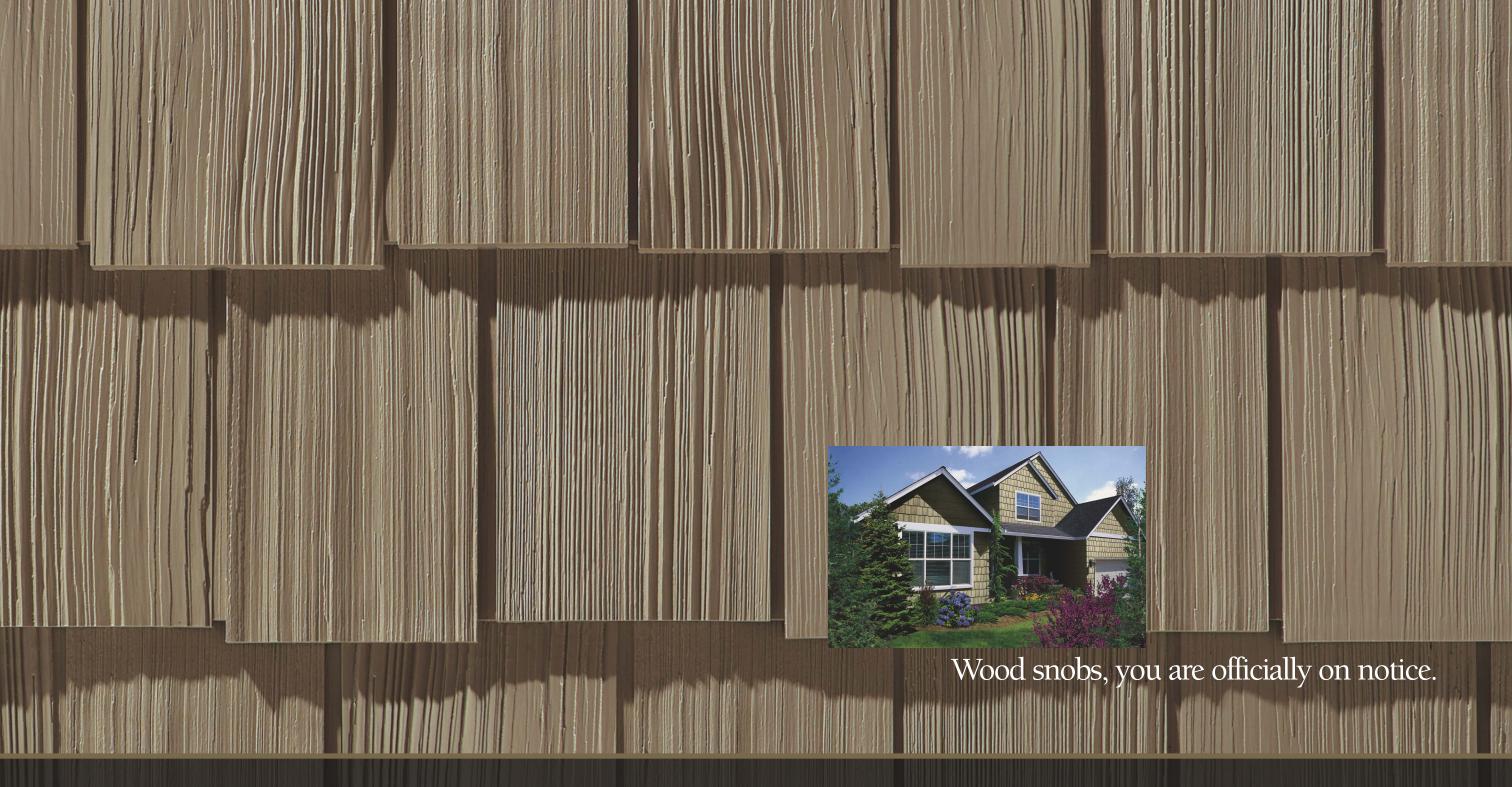
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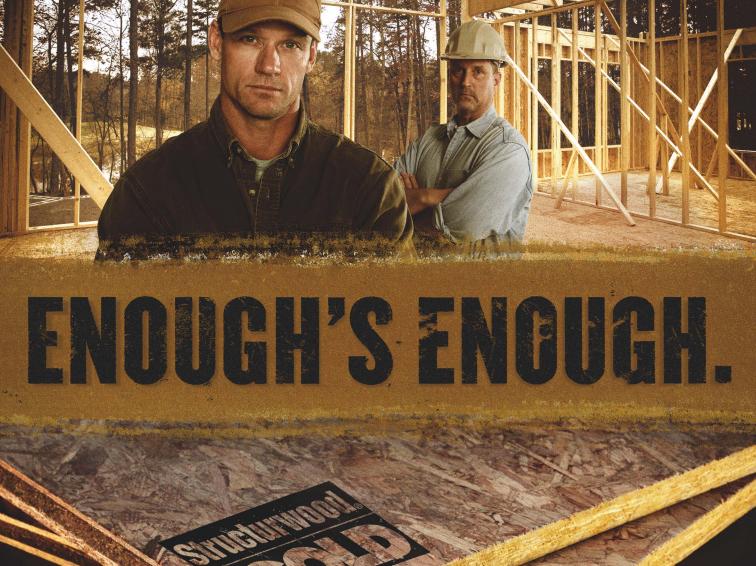
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Contents

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Emerging Issues

Reading the Tides / 62 Economic indicators builders should watch. by Bob Sperber, Senior Editor

Best Practices

How I Learned To /25 **Promote My Business**

Make your company stand out in the crowd. by Felicia Oliver, Senior Editor



Best Practices

- 17 Proactive Solutions
- **How I Learned To Promote My Business** by Felicia Oliver, Senior Editor
- **Lessons Learned**by Scott Sedam
- **The H.R. Dept.** by Bob Piper
- **Customer Satisfaction**by Paul Cardis
- **New Home Knowledge** by John Rymer

Emerging Issues

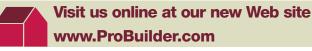
- 61 Proactive Solutions
- **Reading the Tides**by Bob Sperber, Senior Editor
- **No Man's Land**by Matthew Power, Senior Contributing Editor

Plans and Projects

- 100 Proactive Solutions
- **Best in American Living Awards** *by Laura Butalla, Senior Editor*
- **Inside & Out**by Ann Matesi, Contributing Editor
- **How I Solved**by Laura Butalla, Senior Editor

Innovations

- **Proactive Solutions**
- **Applications: Wood Vs. Engineered Lumber** by Felicia Oliver, Senior Editor
- **PATH Report**by Scott Shepard
- **In My Own Words**with Bill Miller, Silver Star Communities
- **Product Review: Flooring**by Rhonda Jackson, Products Editor



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Discount Houses

Welcome to the end of no**haggle pricing.** The last couple of years builder model homes have been like Carmax or Saturn lots. Buyers show up. Salespeople quote a price. Everybody agrees. No haggle. No hassle. It's been great, hasn't it? Salespeople as order takers.

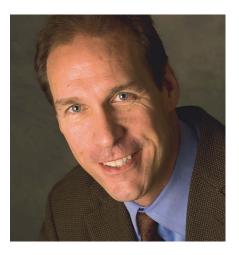
Those days seem to be ending. Salespeople are actually going to have to sell. The days of investors coming into buy new homes, just to flip them a few months later are over. The result of this change is a re-emergence of discounting.

For builders trying to differentiate themselves on quality - which is probably not a bad message for all builders this discounting creates a very uneven playing field. To be honest, it feels a little kneejerk. For an industry that has been flying so high for so long, I worry that jumping so quickly into discounting will facilitate a perception of lagging sales. It's bad enough that we have to deal with daily news reports in the consumer business press about a potential housing bubble, but to fuel the speculation with rampant discounting programs hurts all builders.

Discounting at this time also feels a bit disingenuous. I know homebuyers are much savvier about costs and quality associated with home building than they were 10 years ago. Still, the ability of a home buyer to ascertain costs for any installed building product is a stretch. Offering discounts on products or items they don't really have true sense of the value of is just discounting for discounting sake.

In the sales arsenal, discounting is probably the most powerful method to create a sense of urgency. For an industry that has probably lost some of its sales discipline over the last few years, discounting has real appeal. It's simple and easy, communicates directly with the buyer and makes the builder and his sales staff feel as if they're really doing something.

Discounting undermines the entire value equation. You can get a real clear view of this in the home improvement market. Homeowners can always find someone to do the project for less money than a reputable contractor. Some guy



with tools and a truck is always willing to work for wages. Consequently, professional remodelers must battle constantly with both maintaining and communicating the value equation.

One of the most exciting trends in the home building industry to arise in the last few years has been the strong focus on customer satisfaction. To delight demanding buyers, builders must deliver services in addition to the product. Discounting acts like a rot at the center of a service business. The value equation for service businesses is almost entirely based on the perception of their quality. FedEx was successful because the perception of its service, overnight delivery, allowed it to change the value equation for mail delivery. People would pay 10 times more for an overnight delivery than they would for regular mail, which took an average of two days. If FedEx discounted its service, it would have undermined the entire strength of the company.

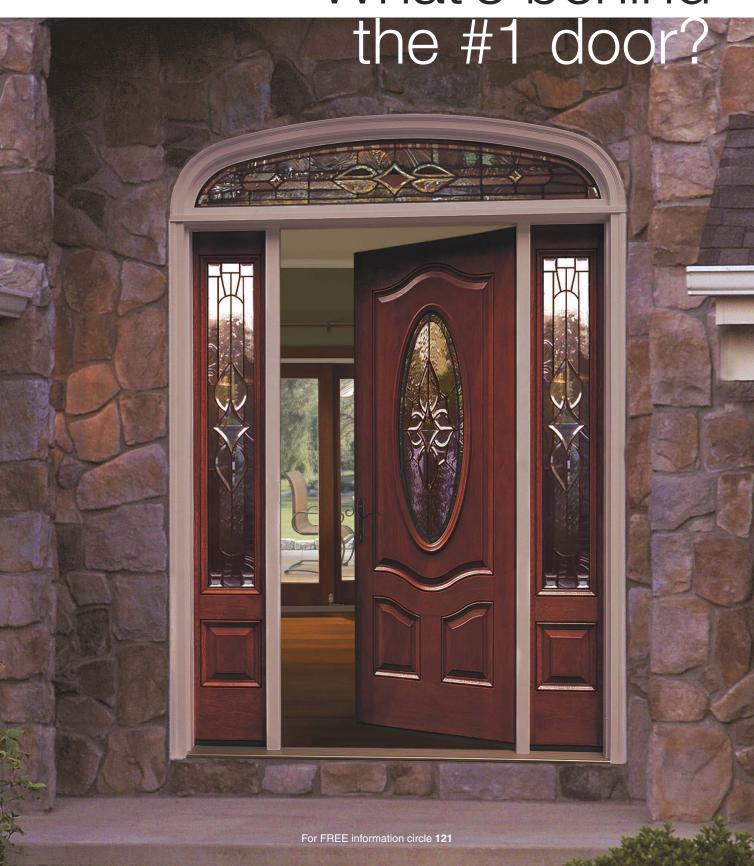
For an industry that looks like it's moving into tougher times, discounting is the wrong answer. Holding margin and maintaining the value equation will help the whole industry. PB

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Proactive Solutions

How They Think

The 17-step process to better public/private development partnerships

Builders need to know how buyers think, but there's another set of people — government officials — who hold just as much clout in a project's life. Increasingly, those in the public sector are thinking of ways to fund major projects without raising taxes. And at any given moment, hundreds of them are in some stage of a public/private partnership.

Residential elements take a back seat to bigger-budget transportation and downtown redevelopment deals. But builders can take advantage of the best practices filtering into the industry from the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships and the Urban Land Institute, to the NAHB.

John Stainback, a Houston-based managing partner of Stainback Public/Private Real Estate (SPPRE), is involved with all three and consults with NAHB. His 17-step pre-development process shows what public officials are thinking, or should be, when approaching a partnership. (See chart.)

Working the steps

If local officials are hitting on all cylinders, they will follow steps one through three to frame the project's overall idea; Steps 4 through 6 deal with research, planning and design; and Steps 7 and 8 cover budgeting and financial analysis. Note that Step 9 — construction phasing — is in blue, and has two-way arrows, or relationships, with Steps 4 and 6, because there's a feedback loop between these steps.

"The boxes are colored for a reason, and those arrows are deliberate, too," Stainback says. "In planning development, market demand analysis feeds the infrastructure plan, which in turn leads to a completed design. So Steps 4, 5 and 6 are blue. But so is Step 9, dealing with development phasing, because those earlier steps play a major role in phasing construction." Similar feedback loops exist between the green Steps 10

through 12 and subsequent steps, like Step 15, representing the contractual negotiations between builder and public partner. Where there are such relationships, some revisions are likely.

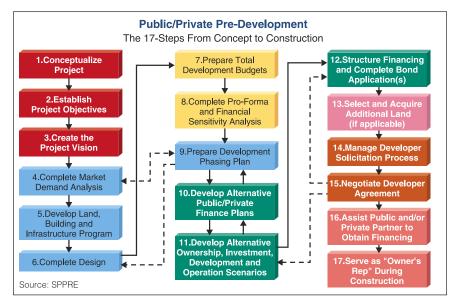
The Builder's Role

Builders don't need a consultant to follow this or a similar process; most of

the RFQ/RFP process begins in Step 14.

While that's common, it's not recommended, he says, because companies seeking an active, leadership role should get involved "as early as they can." These types of builders have been known to play a key role in the initial concept. A good reputation, local relationships and expertise can help builders from greenfield infrastructure to urban redevelopment plans.

Things can go wrong anywhere in the process. Stainback says Step 4 is "critically important" to both sides of the partnership. "Because without a good, thorough market analysis, everything after that point tends to be a little



these steps are part of the typical private development process. However, some call Stainback "after the vision, market study and often the design is done. That's typically for Steps 7 through 12, particularly 10," since public financing mechanisms are usually outside their core competency. In fact, most builders seeking public/private financial don't enter this process until

bit arbitrary and capricious." But there are local governments that skip the first 13 steps and "go straight to the private sector to see what kind of response they get." This is common with less experienced public officials that have a vision and a site in mind but lack the processes to follow for a successful project.

Now, builders can help them.

Proactive Solutions

The Next Big Boom

Researchers define 10 megapolitan areas to predict growth through 2040.

Move over, metropolitan markets, the megapolitans are coming. Estimating housing needs for 83 million more U.S. residents by 2040, researchers at the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech are predicting a \$25-trillion housing boom. To account for this growth and development, they have created 10 supersized market areas they call megapolitan areas, or simply megapolitans.

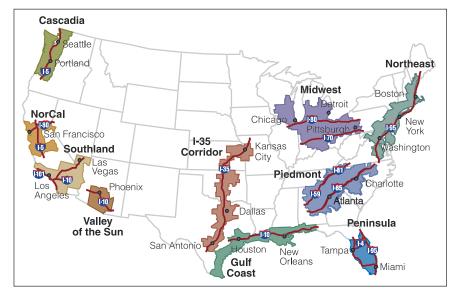
The Institute defines a megapolitan as a network of clustered cities to exceed 10 million residents by 2040. More than a chain of contiguous cities, each is seen as a "functional urban network" with larger regional identity, a transportation infrastructure, a flow of people, goods and services and the capability for regional planning.

Megapolitans create "American versions of Europe," Robert Lang, director of the Metropolitan Institute, says. He cites the regions' ability to provide "much greater connectivity in infrastructure, and have much greater coordination in planning."

A look at the map of the new market areas (at right) shows them occupying less than a 1/5 of the 2.96 square miles of land in the lower 48 states. Megapolitans touch 35 states, and include 39 of the nation's 50 most populous metro areas. Furthermore, these megapolitans will account for 71.1 percent of the housing units built from 2005 to 2040.

Some sizeable markets are left out. For example, Minneapolis is dubbed an "isolate." Denver along with the Colorado Front Range, could be form a "secondary megapolitan" with 2040 population projected at eight million.

Schools and the local governments are backing the research with an eye toward official adoption by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Bureau has already started on this path with new definitions in 2003 and 2004. "Micropolitan Statistical Area" defines the nearly 600



markets with population between 10,000 and 50,000; "central city" replaced "principal city;" and Combined Statistical Areas were created, based on counties.

Counties are also are the "building blocks" for creating megapolitans, Lang says. He adds that builders can now create their own versions of megas because "you can put the puzzle together any way you want with data available today."

Recent research provided the foundation for the proposed mapping. Looking at recent trends, demographer William H. Frey with the Brookings Institute noted the beginnings of a "slowdown and reshuffling" of the U.S. population. Fast-growing metro areas including San Jose, San Francisco and Boston became

some of the slowest-growing areas from 2000 to 2004, while more affordable areas outside major cities became some of the fastest population gainers.

Yet another report from Brookings and Virginia Tech estimated that by 2030, roughly half the buildings in the U.S. will have been built after 2000, led by residential development. It noted that most new growth — 87 percent — will come from the South and West. That report also predicted increasing demand "for compact, walkable and high-quality loving, entertainment and work environments;" and more pressure on jurisdictions to tighten growth controls in an effort to deal with infrastructure and resource challenges such as water availability.

For Further Research

"Beyond Megalopolis: Exploring America's New 'Megapolitan' Geography," http://www.mi.vt.edu/uploads/megacensusreport.pdf

"Metropolitan America in the New Century: Metropolitan and Central City Demographic Shifts Since 2000," http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20050906_metroamerica.htm

"Toward a New Metropolis: The Opportunity to Rebuild America," http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20041213_rebuildamerica.htm



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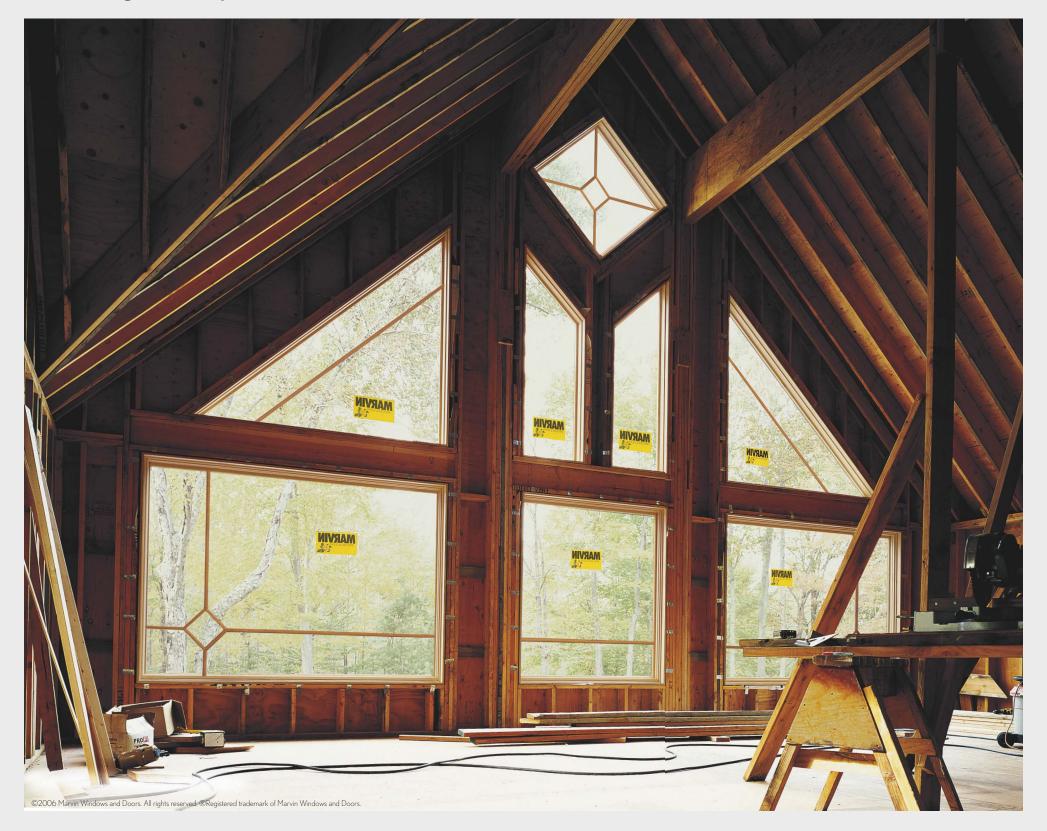
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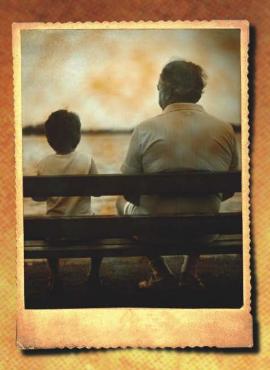
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THE RIGHT PEOPLE.



At Fypon, we've established a culture where integrity and experience are rewarded. Our low turnover helps ensure that every member of our team is among the industry's most knowledgeable, skilled and experienced. From our visionary leaders

who have virtually reinvented the industry by recognizing the needs of our customers to our sales and support staff who succeed only by building long relationships. After all, it's the right people who make Fypon the right choice.

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When we set out to reinvent the millwork industry, we had to rethink how everything is done. Starting with our state-of-the-art, streamlined manufacturing process that enables us to provide the highest levels of quality control while keeping costs competitive. And because we aren't successful unless you are, Fypon provides you with expertly developed, tried-and-true marketing tools, proven lead generation tools and our exclusive online design configurator. Fypon also offers specialized custom tools for architects, builders and contractors.

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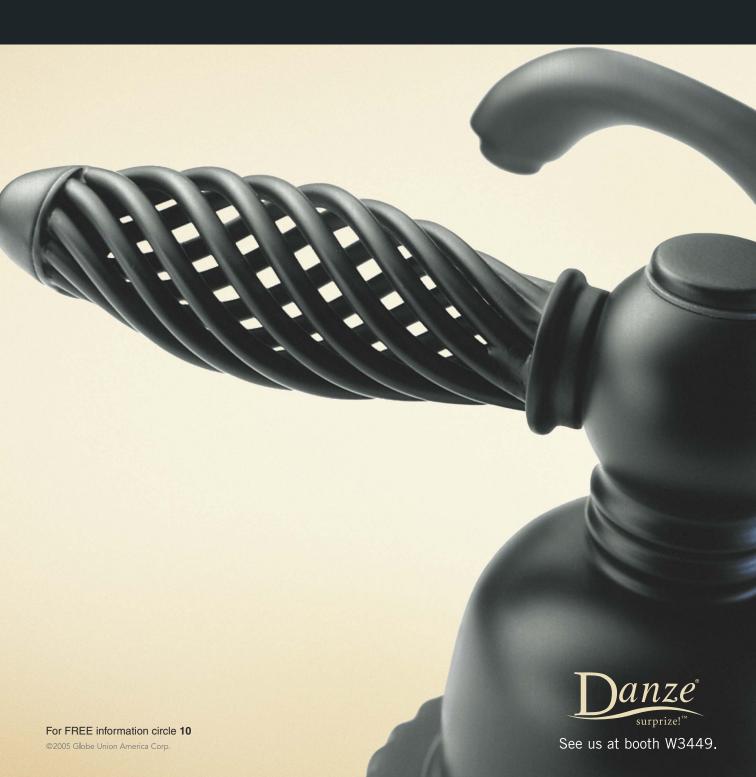
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SAY YOU SEE THIS AT THE SHOW.

DO YOU CALL IT A DAY? OR VISIT OTHER BOOTHS JUST TO BE POLITE?





What Makes You So Special?

With hundreds of builders as competitors, what makes your company stand out in the crowd?

Builders across the country do a great job at what they do best — using their skills and expertise in building well-constructed homes that are a refuge and, in some cases, the fulfillment of a lifelong dream for its owners.

But when it comes down to it, what makes Joe Schmoe Builders a better home builder than XYZ Homes across town? In reality, maybe not a whole lot. However, in the perception of each builder's customers, the difference could be phenomenal. That's the power of branding.

Branding creates a distinctive idea in the minds of potential buyers about what your company has to offer them in comparison to the competition.

"I don't think most builders think of themselves in terms of building a brand," says David Miles of Milesbrand, a real estate advertising agency. "They're home builders, and they want to give people the best home they can give them

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

for the best price they can give it to them and still make money."

Defining your brand is crucial to creating an effective promotional campaign.

"[Consumers] need all the clues they can get in the marketplace to know where they should spend their time," says Miles. "They don't want to be confused week after week with who you are, or where you fit in or how you're different. They don't want to figure it out....They want you to respect their time and make it easy for them.

"If you're remaining true to the brand," he adds, "you have a higher likelihood that the communication is going to be on target for what you really stand for."

Define your brand

"A building company should determine what it is that they do better than the competition," says Jan Mitchell, senior editor for *Sales and Marketing* magazine, and a contributing editor for *Professional Builder*. "What are its strengths? Is it architectural design? Affordability? Family-centered communities? Eco-friendliness or energy efficiency?

"You need to figure out what is different in the customer's mind about your company," says Tracy Rubenstein, director of marketing at T.W. Lewis. "That can be achieved through focus groups, surveys — there are a lot of ways to get to that. But I think [determining] that is crucial."

"No matter what your size, or... whether you think of yourself as a brand or not, the market is going to brand you," says Miles. "You have a choice of being intentional about the identity that you want to create in the world, or allowing the market to determine how they think of you."

SYNCON HOMES LETS PROSPECTS 'DISCOVER THE DIFFERENCE' BEHIND THE FACADE

Builders across the country claim to build quality homes, deliver excellent customer service and offer the best value. The trick is how to make your unique branding proposition real for your customer.

"We came up with a theme, 'Discover Our Difference,'" says Donnie Hanly, president of Syncon Homes of California, "because ... we wanted people to be able to come in and discover what's different about Syncon. ... That's hard to do on a sheet of paper. ... 'We've got mold resistant drywall,' 'We've got full, solid sheer exteriors' ... If it's on a piece of paper, most homeowners look at it and they just don't quite get it. You really need to be able to touch and feel and see something to appreciate it."

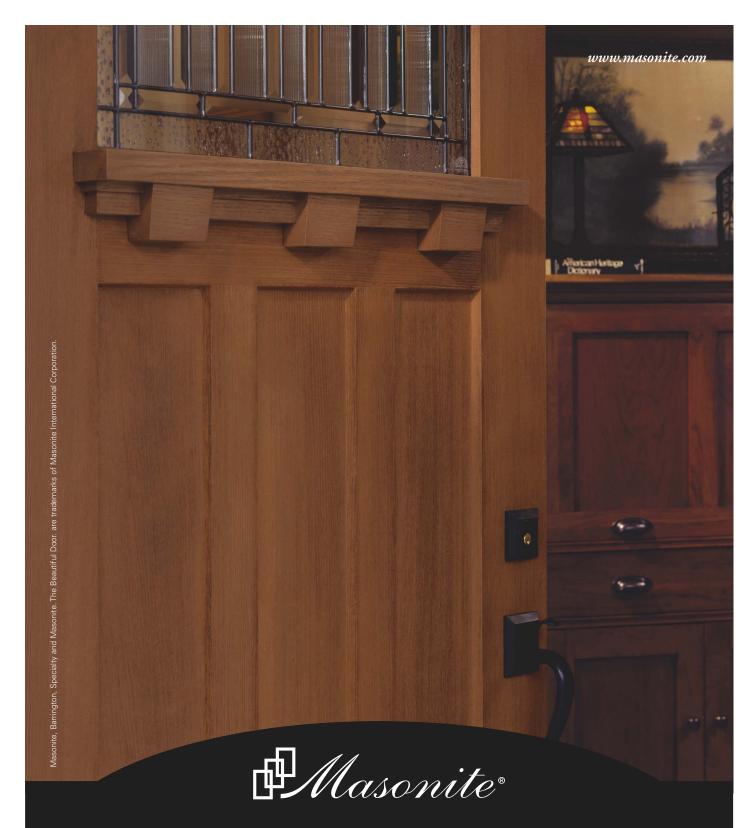
Syncon took a hands-on approach to solving the problem: It took a garage from one of its models and added carpeting, special lighting, and displays that reveal a cross section of what lies behind the walls, inside the roof, and in the window insulation — with labels to explain what each layer of building material is and why it's important. The space is called The Discovery Center. There are currently four in existence and one will be included in every model home complex Syncon builds in the future.

"It ...visually shows how Syncon builds a home differently," says Rochelle Barcellona, president of Barcellona Inc., Syncon's marketing agency. "It's taking you through the whole process — through foundation studs and the lumber, all the way through finishing on the interior.

"Men especially love it," Barcellona adds. "The women go through it and then they want to look in the model homes, and the men just stay in this room because it's so cool. Everything is labeled and you're seeing the builder's story and the logo is being reinforced."







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NISTHWAY

IDEAS WE LOVE

BUILD COMMUNITY WITH EVENTS

Syncon Homes of California builds a sense of community with its owners with regular barbecues and parties.

"We like to ... create a real sense of community within our subdivision," says Syncon President Donnie Hanly. "Even if [we're part of] a master-planned community, and there's five builders in there, we like to have our community stand out more as the community."

Hanly says, "Buyers go and talk to their friends who bought from other builders: "Oh, we're going to a Halloween Party...over at Syncon. What are you guys doing?" and the response is "'Our builder's not doing that.' It ends up really benefiting us."

BECOME AN AUTHORITY

In addition to CEO Carol Meyer's regular TV appearances, other Greenbriar staff are quoted in the local press on home building issues, reinforcing the idea that Greenbriar employees are experts in the field.

"We have a PR person that we work with," Meyer says, "that pitches what we're doing and works with different media on what they're looking for. When we have expertise, we volunteer to be interviewed."

CO-BRAND

Greenbriar also used its broadcast platform to highlight a bright and colorful cross promotion.

"One of our trade partners, Kelly Moore Paints, came out with new Sunset Colors," says Meyer. "So we did a segment on Sunset Colors. We actually painted some walls in our models with the new colors and then we went on television, tied the show into the new colors, invited people out to the models ... and Kelly Moore put the pictures of our models with the colors on their ...paint chip cards."

PRODUCE A VIDEO

T.W. Lewis won a Clarion award this past October for an eight-minute promotional video called "The T.W. Lewis Difference." The Association for Women in Communications sponsors the Clarion Awards.

"We were really frustrated in traditional media," says Tracy Rubenstein, director of marketing at T.W. Lewis, "It was limited in getting across our message. Some parts of our message are pretty easy to get across like style and design. ... But some things about where we differentiate ourselves in terms of our service, the buying experience, and our construction quality - those are a little bit more complicated."

"[The video] is accessible on our Web site," adds Rubenstein. "We also give it out in our sales offices. It's in DVD format, and it's playing continuously in our model homes on TVs."

MAKE IT PERSONAL

John Wieland Homes in Atlanta brands itself as a builder of special homes with a personal touch. The company logo includes founder John Wieland's signature.

"We have a little plaque that has my signature on it that we put inside the closet door of every home we've built, and it has the year that the house was built," says Wieland. "Just a little touch that I signed off on the house."







GREENBRIAR HOMES painted some of its models with Kelly Moore Paints' Sunset Colors. In turn, Kelly Moore featured these Greenbriar models on its color chip cards, resulting in a successful co-branded marketing campaign.



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The Barrington® Sierra™ Fiberglass Entry Door

Masonite is pleased to introduce the Barrington® Sierra®Series, the latest addition to our fiberglass entry door line. Specially engineered to meet the design needs of Southwest, Spanish or Mediterranean style homes, the Sierra Series combines the performance of fiberglass with the beauty of authentic hardwood texture to open up even more design possibilities.





The Cheyenne™

The new Cheyenne™ Two Panel Plank Smooth interior door features a striking panel profile and beautiful beaded planks, creating the perfect rustic, country or western look for any home. It is also available with our patented Safe 'N Sound® solid core construction for additional privacy and safety.



Builders need to know what their brand represents, and implement a change in direction and/or damage control if the brand perception is negative, ineffective — or unattainable.

Donnie Hanly of Syncon Homes of California currently uses the tagline, "Discover our Difference," to brand his company. "A few years back, we were



going with a different theme ...'Expect More,'" Hanly says. "It just set us up for failure. We do a great job on a home. We build it wonderfully. ... They love the house. Then they're still not happy. ... "They say, 'Okay, I've got this, what's next? There's more, right?' ...How do you give them more than — more?"

Practice what you promote

Employees, customers, suppliers — everyone that does business with your company — has to believe that your brand is genuine.

"Branding is important internally," says Miles, "so that the people that work for the firm really know what the firm stands for and hopefully buy into that — so they become brand evangelists for the culture and the core values and how the company operates in the world."

"Everything that we do from a marketing perspective would be meaningless if the customer experience didn't validate that message," says Rubenstein, who received the 2004 Silver Award for Marketing Director of the Year from the National Sales & Marketing Council of the NAHB. "So that really puts responsibility for the brand in the hands of our sales associates, our construction superintendents — all those people that are coming in contact with the customer [are] responsible for that experience."

with Rochelle Barcellona, MIRM, and president of Barcellona Inc. "A lot of times we'll come up with an idea," says Hanly, "and we'll just have it in its infancy stage. [Rochelle] will think about it and then come back to us. We'll start meeting together, and with our team, to bring it to the next level."

No matter **what your size**, or... whether you think of yourself as a **brand or not**, the market is **going to brand you.**

Like it or not, people will talk. Do business in such a way that when they talk about your company, what they share is positive and accurately reflects your brand.

"We've had Christmas and holiday parties that we've done over the years," says Hanly, "and brought all of our homeowners in and they've gotten to meet each other."

Hanly says that because the company's brand — which he describes as caring, community minded, and family oriented — is a genuine reflection of how it treats customers, he doesn't have to worry about what sort of commiserating goes on when all his buyers get together.

"If we were putting up a product that was having a lot of issues, or not taking care of our customers," says Hanly, "the last thing we'd want to do is get them all in one place and have them all talk to each other."

Engage the experts

Not every builder intuitively has the skills to do his own promotion and marketing, but he can learn. The NAHB offers the well-known and respected MIRM designation, which stands for Member, Institute of Residential Marketing. To earn a MIRM, candidates must have, among other things, at least three years experience in new home sales and marketing and complete four required courses.

Builders also have the option of hiring the marketing expertise they need through a consultant or marketing firm.

Syncon Homes works exclusively

"We're a little bit decentralized in our agency support," Rubenstein says. "We tend to use a few different firms instead of one firm handling [every]thing. I think that works better for us."

Greenbriar Homes in Fremont, Calif., uses Gauger + Associates as their advertising agency. Gauger came up with the idea of having Greenbriar's CEO Carol Meyer appear regularly on a local television program called "Bay Area Living with Sunset Magazine."

"I agreed to do it," Meyer says, "and I actually did pretty well at it. ... I'm practiced at telling the story and I'm comfortable in front of a camera."

"We did about a four-minute segment once a month," she says. "Some of it was community service in that we talked about getting your home ready for winter. We talked about drainage. [We] talked about pools one time. And then, of course, we'd show all this stuff by showing our houses."

Get in the game

Think business is too hot in your market to bother with promotion? If so, it may not be for long. "In the markets we're in, I don't think anybody has been doing a lot of promotional things," says Hanly. "But everybody has been getting ready to do them, because it's slowed down quite a bit. ... I think there's a lot of stuff that's in the works with a lot of builders, because we have to go back and work a little harder." **PB**





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LESSONS LEARNED

The Customer Delight Honor Roll

Five home builders that get customer satisfaction right.

In the December "Lesson's Learned" column, I described how my staff analyzed the results of the J.D. Power and Associates 2005 New-Home Builder Customer Satisfaction Study. If you have not yet spent time on the www.jdpower.com public website and perused the rankings by builder and by city, I highly recommend it. The data is both fascinating and revealing. If your firm hasn't yet been measured and you build more than 100 units a year in one of the Top 50 U.S. housing markets, you probably will be soon, so pay attention.

Last month I talked about the negative side and wondered how some of the big regional and national builders could score so consistently low in so many cities, for so long.

Just this week however, I received word that one of the worst offenders was mounting a very serious and very expensive campaign to remedy their low status with customers. Of course, there is a wrong way to approach this — throwing money at the back end — and a right way to do it — reengineering a company's processes from start to finish.

You can't do that without extraordinary management commitment. Does this firm

have that? Time will tell, but the important message is that J.D. Power has finally gotten to even the lowest performers. This "customer satisfaction thing" is not going away.

Focusing on the positive, we wanted to learn just who is the best on a national basis among firms doing business in more than three cities. It is important first to note that there are many local builders who compete head-to-head with the best of the regionals and nationals.

Some of these locals that I know well are Robertson Brothers in Detroit, Lakewood Homes in Chicago and Tripp/Trademark Homes in Tampa who, by the way, finished at the top of J.D.



Power in only their 4th year in existence. I recognize these local builders to establish clearly that customer delight is in no way the exclusive domain of the Giants. Arguably, it is more difficult to achieve the highest levels across a broad range of markets, but I can tell you from personal observation that key success drivers are the same for builders of all sizes in all locations.

A national calculation is tricky due to complicating factors, such as builders with multiple divisions in one market and wide variations in norms among the 30 J.D. Power markets. You can't simply total the scores, divide then compare averages. You



need a method to assign values to the rankings that makes sense based on reasonable assumptions of how customers will respond when they see the J.D. Power results.

We tried five different scoring schemes, all logical and sensible, and no matter how many ways we ran the data, the same five builders always emerged at the top.

The rankings within the top five changed a bit with different approaches, so we decided to present the results alphabetically, but the top five were always the same. What's more, in each approach there was a clear and undenionce shaky reputation as far back as 1990. In those days, the message was not generally well received. (As a full disclaimer, you should know that I worked for Pulte from 1989 to 1997.)

Now, however, you would be hardpressed to attend any industry conference without one or more representatives from our top five builders or one of the best locals on the program explaining, one more time, what it takes to achieve customer delight and why it's a profitable business strategy.

So what is it about these firms that is truly different? They have built a high-performance culture focused on cus-

I spoke at a Centex company meeting years ago and Tim Eller began the meeting with a statement that set the entire audience back in their chairs. "We have concluded that the company who reaches the highest level of customer satisfaction is recession-proof."

Bert Selva at Shea and Larry Webb from John Laing Homes beat the customer drum every single day in their firms, both of which have won top industry awards while being singled out for exceptional customer satisfaction. And Richard Dugas was the one guy Bill Pulte thought could ensure that the tradition of quality in a company that was once lost and now restored, would never falter again.

If you have ever heard any of these 5 industry leaders or the many key executives who work with them speak, you know immediately they are for real and you understand exactly what drives the exceptional cultures in their firms.

Last month, I quoted Brian Joiner, who said, "Every system (or company) is perfectly designed to get the results it is getting."

Ultimately, the leadership of a company owns the system. It is in your hands. Even if you didn't originally design it, you are the one maintaining it. If you truly want to be like our five members of the honor roll or any of the top locals, you will have to redesign your system and lead your people in the new way.

That's what leadership is all about. Go mix up some Kool-Aid. **PB**

Scott Sedam is President of TrueNorth Development, a nation-wide consulting & training firm focused on quality, process improvement and organizational development.

THE 2005 CUSTOMER DELIGHT HONOR ROLL

- Centex/Fox & Jacobs
- David Weekley Homes
- John Laing Homes
- Pulte/Del Webb/DiVosta
- Shea Homes



able statistical break between #5 and #6. In other words, these were the top performers by a substantial margin. This was not a close call.

For two reasons, special mention should be made of the Pulte/Del Webb/DiVosta family. First, they once again finished #1 in more cities (16) than any other builder. Centex was #2 by this measure, with 11 first place finishes, a huge leap from last year. Second, Pulte has earned the most Top three J.D. Power Awards of any builder for six consecutive years. That is an exceptional achievement that may never happen again.

Pulte has, indeed, been ahead of most of home building in the customer satisfaction department for years and dramatically so. But it is no surprise to Pulte that others have closed the gap.

This is a very open industry with a great deal of movement of people and at the end of the day, there are no secrets.

Pulte executives and managers began openly discussing trying to change their

tomer satisfaction. I have written extensively (some might say ad nauseum) about the critical importance of organizational culture and how it drives everything that works — and doesn't work — in a company.

You can search back through old columns I have written on the HousingZone.com archives and find many lists and descriptions of how the best firms approach construction, purchasing, design, customer service, sales or any other element of both strategy and daily operations. It is all driven by culture.

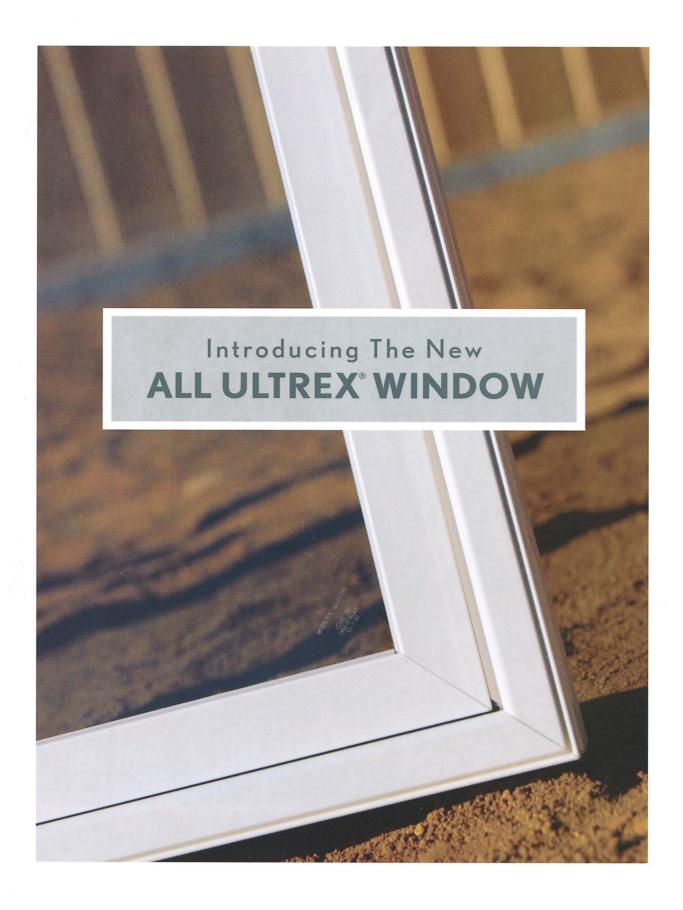
But have you wondered exactly what drives the culture? Who is it that mixes the cultural Kool-Aid and gets people to willingly drink it down?

I have had the good fortune to meet the leaders of all five of our honor roll companies and in several cases know them personally. Each is an exceptional leader, and customer commitment is not a newfound revelation for any. I was on a program with David Weekley in 1991 and he didn't just get it, he was already living it.

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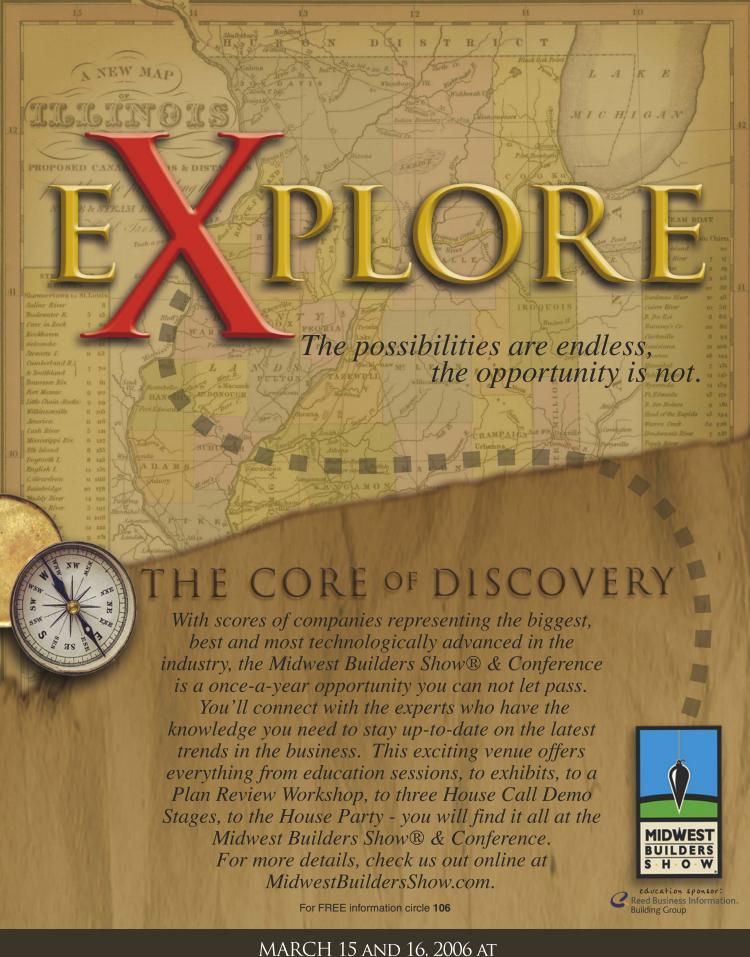
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Why Employee Satisfaction?

Everyone's abuzz about the J.D. Power home builder rankings, and rightfully so. Regardless of your personal stance on the data, more potential home buyers are making it part of their research prior to making a buying decision. And if they're not, you can bet the salesperson of any well ranked company is bringing it to their attention.

When you peel back the onion of customer satisfaction you'll find an underlying correlation to employee satisfaction. Simply put, it takes satisfied employees to produce satisfied customers and takes satisfied customers to grow any business.

Satisfied employees tend to willingly make contributions to the organization to ensure its financial security and longevity; realize and take pride in the importance and value of their work to internal and external customers alike; feel valued; welcome personal development and growth; feel free to share their opinions and ideas honestly; and better serve the needs of the customer.

How do you know if your employees are happy? Give them an opportunity to tell you anonymously. The best vehicle to get that type of input is an employee satisfaction survey.

What's the obstacle? Many senior managers say they have a good handle on their employees' opinions. Remarks like, "My people are never shy about telling me what's on their minds," or "We have an open door policy... no secrets in our company," are common. That's

great, and if true, those managers won't be surprised by the results of a survey. However, in a recent survey we conducted, a manager was surprised. The results indicated the sales team felt its division president tended to unnecessarily override the vice president of sales. When he asked the vice president of sales if this was true, the vice president answered affirmatively. The surprised division president then asked, "Why didn't you say something?" The vice president of sales responded, "I assumed you knew you were doing it."

The Bottom line — employee satisfaction surveys are good business and good for your business. After all, who better knows what is going on in every part of your operation than the people actually performing the work? The survey solicits your employees' perceptions, which are their reality. Does their reality allow them to perform to their optimum level? If not, what is holding them back?

So, if you want to get a leg up on the customer satisfaction race, as well as develop and maintain a participative company culture, a great firststep is an employee satisfac-





If you want to get a leg up on the customer satisfaction race, as well as develop and maintain a participative company culture, a great first step is an employee satisfaction survey.

tion survey. But before you launch one here are a few things to keep in mind:

- The survey must be completely confidential guaranteed anonymity for all participants.
- Talk it up. Let participants know the importance of the project. Let them know you are interested in their opinions.
- Be prepared to share the findings with your people, and most importantly, what next steps will be taken.
- Repeat annually to check progress.

While each survey is unique, the better ones should provide insight into the following areas:

- Company values
- Customer orientation
- Effective communication
- Company image
- Work environment
- Performance and development
- Management practices
- Co-Worker relations
- Compensation and benefits
- Future orientation

If you have specific, measurable information in the above categories, you can capitalize on your strengths and identify your opportunities for improvement. You should be able to spot potential problem areas before they become a reality. Additionally, you can plan and allocate your resources (financial and otherwise) more effectively. Everyone benefits - the company, the employees, and yes, the customer. **PB**



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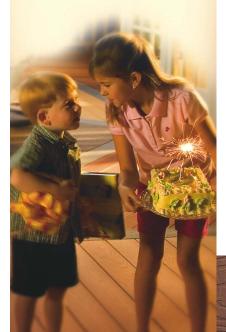
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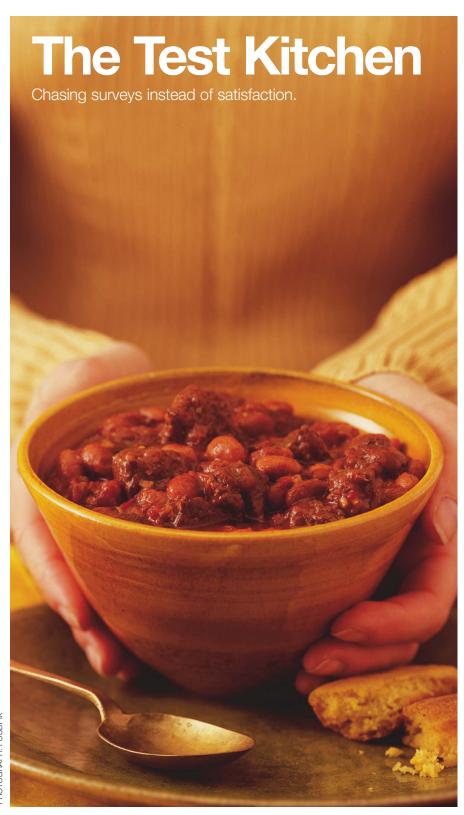




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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



Imagine yourself judging a chili cooking contest, with long tables lined with big steaming pots of homemade chili. Given that each pot of chili has been stirred well, you are able to taste just one spoonful to determine how the whole pot tastes. That's because the small sample accurately represents the entire pot. Now imagine if you had to eat half of the pot in order to make the same determination. There's not enough antacid to relieve that heartburn.

A lot of home builders are giving themselves heartburn by insisting on more survey responses when accurate results can be obtained from a much smaller number of returned questionnaires. Making matters worse, there are a number of research companies tying to woo builders away from their current research program by claiming you need 80 percent of surveys filled out.

Why this overemphasis on quantity instead of quality? Besides lack of knowledge, it could be human nature. No one likes bad news, so there's a natural response not to believe it, and many people will try to explain it away. "How can this be?" they wonder. "Clearly, the survey was only filled out by our dissatisfied customers. All of our happy customers must have thrown it away." Such reactions, however, are nothing more than misleading thoughts by those grasping to make sense of results they prefer not to accept.

A quality survey administered properly *will* yield accurate results with less than 80 percent response rate. Best of all, the response rate needed to achieve results that are 90 percent accurate is often a lot smaller than you may think.

If you built more than 125 homes you do not need 80 percent of the surveys returned to accurately gauge your performance in customer satisfaction. That's because the power of randomization and avoiding bias comes into play. Just like that stirred up pot of chili, all you need is a tablespoon to get proper taste, given that the pot is big enough. If the pot were too small you might scoop up a burnt edge that doesn't reflect the true quality of the chili.

Sure, the first surveys to pour in might be from angry customers anxious for an opportunity to vent their frustrations. Given time, however, the total number of returned surveys will be a proportional representation of the entire customer base. The key is to give your program time to reach the targeted response rate and you will have the same group as if you received all of the surveys.

Assuming that you are surveying all of your customers, what response rate should you aim for? Generally, as the population size increases, the needed response rate goes down. In our experience, most larger builders can be reasonably confident in the overall company results with just a 20 percent response rate. Though higher response rates might give you more peace of mind, the fact is that the results don't change significantly. Once you reach 40-

RESPONSE RATES

90% confidence +/-6% error

Number of Homes Built	Response Rate Needed
125	60%
225	46%
325	37%
500	27%
1000	16%
10,000	2%

50 percent, you are as good as its going to get with more than 125 homes. The chart above shows the necessary number of surveys needed given the number of homes built. Assuming we want to be 90 percent confident in the results and the maximum scores could vary being only +/-6%. (on a 6 point scale, this would mean scores could go up or down +/-0.36; on a 10 point scale it would mean scores could go up or down +/-0.6).

NRS once conducted a survey for a builder that generated a 50 percent response rate with more than 400 closings in a year. The client, however, wasn't happy with the negative results and insisted that only the unhappy customers responded, despite showing him the response rate chart. Rather than face reality, he paid us to drive the response rate up to 75 percent. Now, if the builder's theory were true, we should have seen some change in the results. Yet, despite having a 75 percent response rate, the survey results stayed the same.

This home builder is not alone in its thinking. A lot of companies overemphasize the importance of huge survey responses and waste precious time chasing surveys instead of satisfaction. Look at how often sales staff or construction supers chase customers to get the survey response rates up and you can see why this has become a real problem for many home builders. Unfortunately, while a lot of home builders spend a great deal of time and energy to increase the num-

ber of survey responses, those resources are not being used to address the customer satisfaction problems identified in the survey results.

Imagine what would happen, however, if home builders stopped chasing higher survey response rates and instead turned their attention to improving the areas of their businesses that are disappointing customers? The results won't change significantly — even if you got 100 percent participation. Meanwhile, the things that could really improve customer satisfaction and create delighted loyal customers are being ignored.

This fact hasn't been lost for the best in customer satisfaction. Pulte Homes, which is the leader in homebuyer satisfaction in the U.S, with 16 divisions ranked #1. Pulte knows the importance customer satisfaction plays in improving its performance. So, what response rate does it use for its customer satisfaction surveys? A respectable 40-50 percent. Centex Homes ranked #1 in 10 divisions uses also uses a different survey with a 40-50 percent response, John Laing Homes the #1 builder in North America in customer satisfaction, recipient of the 2005 NRS Diamond Award presented by Professional Builder receives a 50-60 percent response rate. The list of leading companies is long who understand that focusing satisfaction with customers is more important than being distracted with unnecessary survey response rates. Make sure your company isn't wasting resources chasing surveys in lieu of customer satisfaction and delight. PB

Paul Cardis is CEO of NRS Corporation, a leading research and consulting firm specializing in customer satisfaction for the home building industry. He can be reached at pacardis@nrscorp.com.



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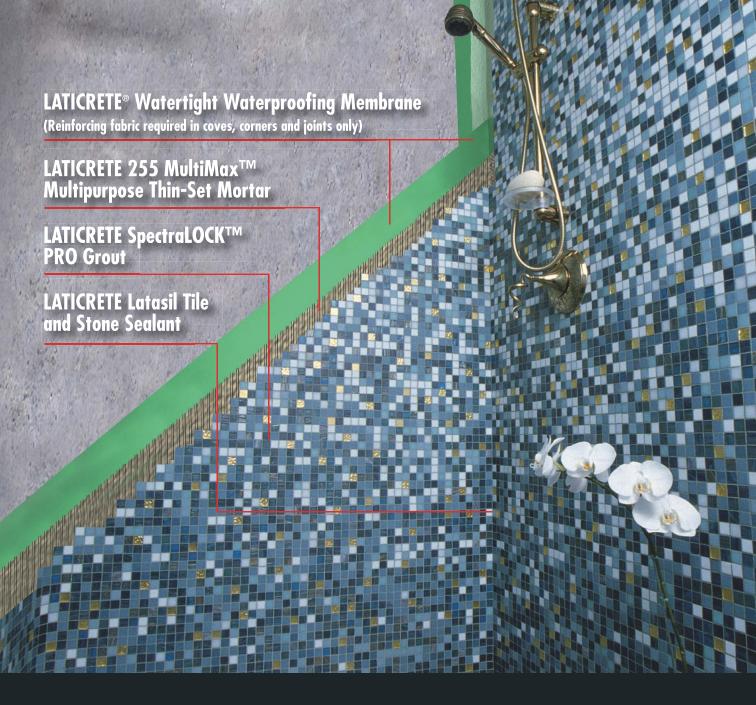


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Keeping customers happy when instant gratification isn't an option.

John Rymer:

In today's market, some customers are being asked to wait a year or even longer before they can even move into their home. This weakens the emotional appeal of the sale and allows additional time for cancellations. Do you change your presentation for extended deliveries? How do you keep a happy customer and minimize cancellations?

Ana Oceguera: West Coast, mid size builder

West Coast, mid size builder
Annual Sales - 109 Units; Annual \$ Value - \$29 million

SELLING EXTENDED DELIVERIES CAN BE TOUGH. I'm in a situation where my customer knows they could buy a home down the street and move six to nine months earlier. But I ask them, "Is it going to be the home you really want?" "Isn't this the community you envisioned your family spending their most important years?" I think it's important that you point those things out. The way that you minimize the cancellations is by always keeping in touch. I think it's very important that no matter why you're calling, you make sure that you package it well, "This is exactly what's going on. I just wanted to let you know that we're at this stage of your home. If you'd like to come out, I'd love to walk the home with you."

Kevin Moore:

Southwest, large builder

Annual Sales - 56 Units; Annual \$ Value - \$31 million

EXTENDED DELIVERY CAN BE CHALLENGING. What the seasoned sales professional has to do is set the buyer's expectations up front and reinforce it continually during the entire construction process. You have to make the buyer aware that there's a myriad of variables that affect our industry and the construction process — labor shortages, concrete shortages, materials shortages, scheduling — and it is next to impossible to predict or give an estimated closing date. The key is to reinforce the fact that unexpected situations will arise. It is added work, but you will end up with a more satisfied buyer and you're going to minimize the cancellations.

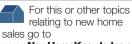
Cliff Miller:

Florida, large builder

Annual Sales - 68 Units; Annual \$ Value - 14 million

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO MINIMIZE CANCELLATIONS IS TO STAY IN TOUGH WITH YOUR BUYER SO THAT THEY KNOW THAT YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THEM. If nothing happens during the week of construction to their particular home, give them a call and let them know that you're still working on it, that you haven't forgotten them, that they're not just another number. There are reasons for things taking as long as they are and it's just critical that the buyers are made aware and you keep making them aware so that they don't forget.

Customers that have told me that the builder down the street could get them in three months on a home that's already under construction, and I ask them: "How important is it to be able to pick everything in your home that you want to make it a one of a kind picture versus the home that somebody else has already picked the generic options for and set it up." I find that most people, unless it really is a time restraint that they just have to be in before school or something, most people are going to be willing to wait.



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Icynene introduces its Builder Advantage Marketing Support Program, designed to help you sell your Healthier, Quieter, More Energy Efficient® homes. To request a **FREE** copy of the program visit, **Icynene.com/insulateright.aspx**



Icynene Demonstrates That It's What's Behind the Walls That Counts

Icynene® is the insulation of choice for the innovative 2006 Show Village project. Icynene® demonstrates how superior performance can be incorporated into any plan to deliver all the benefits that homeowners want – from building durability to energy efficiency. As a soft expanding foam, Icynene® is a dual-performing insulation and air barrier system that creates a superior air-seal, effectively minimizing air leakage to deliver advanced moisture control, healthy air, and energy savings of up to 50%.

The Show Village "First-Time Buyer" Home is featured at the 2006 International Builders' Show in Orlando, Florida. The home showcases innovation by demonstrating quality building practices, behind the walls technologies, and means to overcome callbacks.

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deliver more than ever before. Attend the free informative technical sessions at Dow Solutions Theater (W2543) at the International Builders' Show in Orlando January 11-14 to learn why

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1	Technical Sessions Schedule			
	Wednesday, Jan. 11	Thursday, Jan. 12	Friday, Jan. 13	Saturday, Jan. 14
	9:30-10:30 Extreme Building for All Climates, Joseph Lstiburek, Building Science Corporation	9:30-10:30 Extreme Building for All Climates, Joseph Lstiburek, Building Science Corporation	9:30-10:30 Extreme Building for All Climates, Joseph Lstiburek, Building Science Corporation	9:00-9:45 Energy and Moisture Solutions from Dow, Dow
	10:30-11:15 Benefits of a Closed Crawl Space, Jeff Tooley, The Healthy Building Company	10:30-11:15 Benefits of a Closed Crawl Space, Jeff Tooley, The Healthy Building Company	10:30-11:15 Benefits of a Closed Crawl Space, Jeff Tooley, The Healthy Building Company	10:00-10:45 Insulating and Finishing a Better Basement, Dow
	11:15-Noon Insulating and Finishing a Better Basement, Dow	11:15-Noon Insulating and Finishing a Better Basement, Dow	11:15-Noon Insulating and Finishing a Better Basement, Dow	11:00-Noon Protecting Basements and Foundations, Dow
	1:00-2:00 Protecting Basements and Foundations, Dow	1:00-2:00 Protecting Basements and Foundations, Dow	1:00-2:00 Protecting Basements and Foundations, Dow	
	2:00-3:00 Compatible Wall Bracing and Foam Sheathing Solutions, Jay H. Crandell, Consulting Engineer	2:00-3:00 Compatible Wall Bracing and Foam Sheathing Solutions, Jay H. Crandell, Consulting Engineer	2:00-3:00 Compatible Wall Bracing and Foam Sheathing Solutions, Jay H. Crandell, Consulting Engineer	
	3:00-3:30 Shear Wall Panels for Advanced Framing, Peter Baker, PE, Building Science Corporation, and Jim Wilcoski, PE, Department of Army, Corps of Engineers, Sponsored by Tamlyn	3:00-3:30 Shear Wall Panels for Advanced Framing, Peter Baker, PE, Building Science Corporation, and Jim Wilcoski, PE, Department of Army, Corps of Engineers, Sponsored by Tamlyn	3:00-3:45 Energy and Moisture Solutions from Dow, Dow	
	3:30-4:15 Energy and Moisture Solutions from Dow, Dow	3:30-4:15 Energy and Moisture Solutions from Dow, Dow	4:00-4:45 The Superior Advantages of Precast Concrete Walls, Jim Osborne, Superior Walls	
	4:15-5:00 The Superior Advantages of Precast Concrete Walls, Jim Osborne, Superior Walls	4:15-5:00 The Superior Advantages of Precast Concrete Walls, Jim Osborne, Superior Walls		

Seating is limited. Register at www.insulateyourhome.com/ibs for the informative technical sessions.









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Jeff T. Sweigart, President, JTS Communities, Inc.

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>> BY LAURA BUTALLA, SENIOR EDITOR

Inflating Material Prices

According to Associated General Contractors of

America (AGC), in the past two years, construction costs appear to be rising faster than the general rate of inflation.

Heavy construction in the U.S. and rapid growth in Asia have created a strong demand for a number of construction materials.

"The impact of the hurricanes has shown up most dramatically in the cost of diesel fuel and natural gas," says Ken Simonson, chief economist for AGC.

Inflation of diesel fuel impacts contractors most. "It's important to contractors because not only do they use diesel fuel to power their own construction trucks, concrete mixers and cranes, they also pay a fuel surcharge on deliveries to their job sites," Simonson says.

Simonson recommends coping with inflation prices by staying in contact with suppliers and keeping the homebuyer informed.

Changes in Costs for Specific Construction Inputs

Percentage change in 12 months ending	Sept. 2004	Sept. 2005
#2 Diesel Fuel	54.7	50.9
Asphalt	11.6	15.1
Paving Mixtures & Blocks	2.9	10.5
Concrete Products	7	10
Concrete Block & Brick	4.8	8
Concrete Pipe	4.4	4.3
Ready-mixed Concrete	7.8	12.3
Precast Concrete Products	6.3	6.5
Prestressed Concrete Products	7.6	4.5
Brick & Structural Clay Tile	3.1	5.2
Asphalt Felts & Coatings	2.1	13.2
Gypsum Products	20.8	12.7
Insulation Materials	11.2	-0.3
Plastic Construction Products	6.3	5.4
Lumber & Plywood	16.5	-8.5
Steel Mill Products	48.2	-5.5
Hot-rolled Bars, Plates & Structural Shapes	61	-2
Steel Pipe & Tube	66	0.3
Copper & Brass Mill Shapes	32.2	19.2
Aluminum Mill Shapes	7.5	5.6
Structural, Architectural, Pre-Engineered Metal Products	24.1	3.5
Fabricated Structural Metal	23.7	3.5
Fabricated Structural Metal for Buildings	18.9	3.4
Architectural & Ornamental Metalwork	24	1.8
Fabricated Iron & Steel Pipe, Tube & Fittings	30.8	3.6
Nonferrous Pipe, Tube & Fittings	2	12.8
Fabricated Steel Plate	11.5	-5.7
Prefabricated Metal Buildings	32.9	1.8
Construction Machinery & Equipment	3.9	6.7
Source: Associated General Contractors of America		

>> FELICIA OLIVER, SENIOR EDITOR

EPA Raises the Bar, Lowers Utility Bills

NAHB says builders need more time to make the adjustment

Builders will have to significantly increase the energy efficiency of their homes to meet new Energy Star requirements scheduled to take effect July I, 2006.

To qualify under the revised Energy Star specifications, new homes must have higher levels of insulation inspected for proper installation; complete framing and air barrier assemblies that enable insulation to perform at its full-rated value; windows that meet or exceed Energy Star requirements; high-efficiency and properly sized, climate-appropriate heating and cooling equipment; and more energy-efficient water heating, lighting and appliances.

Over the next 20 years, the EPA estimates that this increase in energy efficiency for Energy Star qualified homes will save homeowners more than \$2 billion in utility bills, and eliminate more than 7 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

The NAHB has expressed concern that the July date will not give builders sufficient time to transition to the new standards. They prefer a timetable specified in an earlier draft that gave new communities until July I, 2006 to state their intention to go Energy Star, and until January I, 2007 to qualify under the old Energy Star standards.

"Builders need time to digest the changes and decide if it is economically feasible to maintain their commitment to Energy Star," the NAHB says in a written response to the new standards. "One would think that EPA would like to give them this opportunity, as opposed to setting an arbitrary date for implementation that hurts the builder."

>> BY **BOB SPERBER,** SENIOR EDITOR

Reading the



Tides

Economic indicators builders need to navigate a changing economy.

Whoever said a rising tide lifts all boats didn't know boats.

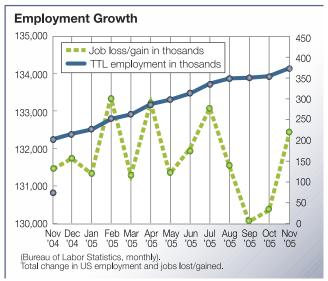
All boats, like all building companies, fare very differently in the same conditions. No two voyages are exactly the same. Even with the best captain and an experienced crew, navigating rough seas and storms takes a blend of technical know-how and sheer brass. But with the right team and some discipline, a well-maintained cruising dinghy can overtake the sleekest high-tech racer with a mediocre crew.

No one can control nature or the economy. At times, environmental elements are too great for

any captain, or captain of industry. But a good sailor can read the tide charts before setting out, adjust for changing winds and pick the wisest course. For starters, a builder can run a tight ship with a good internal budget and efficient processes. But the minute he thinks about moving dirt, the business becomes part of a larger ecosystem.

Therefore, builders need to understand the economic indicators that buffet the industry. Knowing which indicators matter and why can help a builder sail ahead on sunny days, and know what course to chart when the boom comes down.





Below are the most important indicators for a builder to watch:

Interest Rates: 30-yr fixed; 1-yr ARM, 10-year T-bill set by the Federal Reserve Bank and reported monthly.

Employment: Total change in U.S. employment reported monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Permits: Total U.S. permits and regional permits for new home construction in both single family and multifamily. Reported monthly.

Starts: Total U.S. housing starts reported monthly by the U.S. Census Bureau.

New-Home Sales: Sales of new homes reported by U.S. Census Bureau monthly.

Existing Home Sales: National Association of Realtors reports existing home sales monthly.

New Single-Family Home Prices: Prices for new single-family homes reported by Census Bureau on a monthly basis.

Existing Single-Family Home Prices: National Association of Realtors reports prices on single-family homes.

Inventory: Census Bureau reports available inventory of new homes and the National Association of Realtors reports existing homes. Reports are available monthly.

Materials Prices: Producer Price Index (PPI) for Residential and/or single-family construction reported monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Consumer Confidence: Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index from the University of Michigan, reported monthly. Also, the Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index, reported monthly.

NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index: The Housing Market Index (HMI) is a composite index that measure builder confidence and reported monthly.

Interest Rates

When it comes to housing market forecasts, mortgage rates are "clearly the biggest single factor," Michael Carliner, economist with NAHB, says. Add interest rates, widely recognized as the most important variable to Wall Street housing industry watchers for a complete and very leading indicator for builders.

Builders can easily track 30-year fixed and adjustable-rate mortgages with the Weekly Primary Mortgage Market Survey from Freddie Mac. These can be viewed against the open-market long-term rates, otherwise known as 10-year Treasury bills, which lead those mortgage rates. Viewing mortgage rates against the backdrop of long-term interest rates — and keeping an ear on news announcements from the Federal Reserve Bank — can help builders predict demand patterns months, a year or more in advance.

Some economists follow the yield curve, which is the spread between long and short rates. But rates that are easily tracked individually, so this statistical abstraction is a bit removed for builder's needs. **Pros:** The "most important" and leading indicator of housing demand.

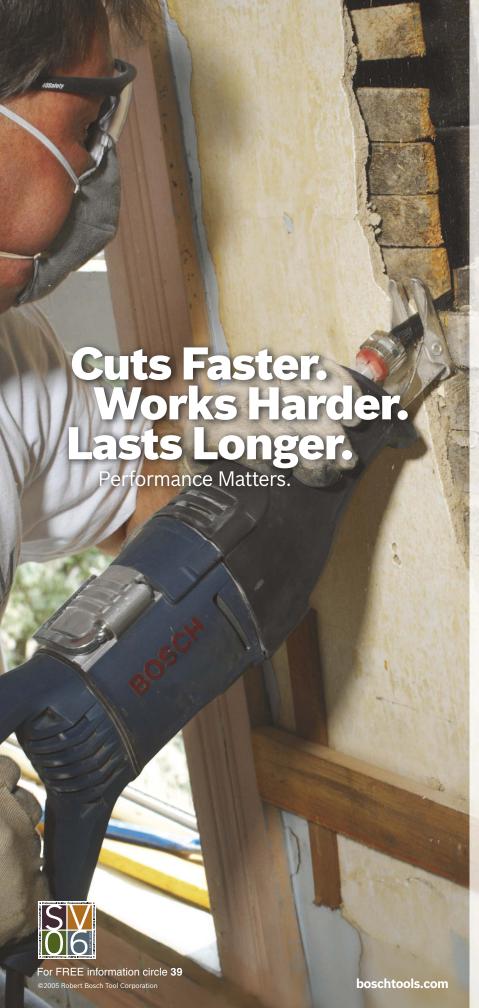
Cons: Short-term trends can mislead.

Employment Growth

With some caveats, an increase in jobs produces an increase in households and therefore housing demand. The BLS Current Employment Statistics (CES) program is the benchmark source. The most comprehensive number for viewing job market health is the total change in U.S. employment, that is, the number of jobs lost or gained each month.

The CES surveys 160,000 businesses drawn from a sample of 400,000 in 850 non-farm industries. Monthly data include total employment, number of women employed, number of production or non-supervisory workers, average hourly earnings, average weekly hours, average weekly earnings, and average weekly overtime hours in manufacturing industries. The survey covers production workers in natural resources, mining, manufacturing, and construction, as well as non-supervisory workers in the service industries. It does not cover smaller groups including the self-employed and one big group: military personnel, builders can, however, factor-in based on military base locations.

BLS also reports initial unemployment insurance claims and the unemployment rate. The first is an accurate tally from BLS. The second is less trusted by the experts; it's an extrapolation based on 2000 Census data supple-



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mented by a relatively small, monthly Current Population Survey of households by the Bureau. Generally, housing economists prefer to track employment — potential buyers — than to follow non-prospects.

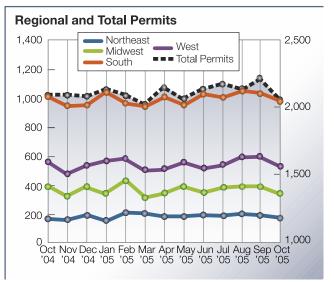
But in the current economy, experts are uncertain about recent events. Since 1970, employment and housing starts dipped whenever employment fell. Then, conventional wisdom was shattered as employment track flat-to-negative while housing boomed from 2001 to 2003.

"If builders based all their plans on employment during

those boom years," Carliner says, "they wouldn't have built anything... Population would be a better indicator of housing demand." The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey provides monthly updates of household and employment data. But this survey is relatively small and highly extrapolated from a larger, annual survey. "And none of it is timely or directly observable," Carliner says. "So we use employment — because it's there. It isn't perfect but it's the best combination of a statistic being important and available."

The BLS data are trusted at the national and major-regional level but are "spotty" data below the major metropolitan level, Carliner says. For example, it's hard to trust part-time vs. full-time job counts. Also, when viewing monthly levels, builders should avoid short-term conclusions. Inclement weather, for example, can keep outdoor workers off the job, but their hours will bounce back the next week or month. Jobs also differ in their quality and effect on local economies.

"Some jobs create other jobs, and some don't," Jim Haughey, director of Economics for Reed Business Information, says. (Disclosure: RBI publishes *Professional Builder.*) A military base, factory or large financial employer is more likely to generate more jobs to serve its employees. "These types of jobs are a lot more useful to builders than a situation where the only jobs being created are at the local pizza parlor, the gro-



cery store or a strip mall."

There's one more related threat: Since 2000, 38 percent are in real estate. This could represent an artificially strong job economy. It looks good, but it "may not be all that all that rosy when you look at what's driving it," Justin Speer, researcher with Credit Suisse First Boston, says.

Pros: Without timely and accurate population demographics, it's the best and most leading indicator to forecast demand.

Cons: Trust issues. Counter to convention, employment fell 2001 to 2003 but housing boomed, confounding all predictions.

Permit Approvals

Housing permits are a good shortterm leading indicator, weeks if not months ahead of starts and sales. It's useful to track the total number of permits, seasonally adjusted, for single-family units. Data are also available for twoto-four unit buildings and five-plus units. Single-family trending provides a useful trend, but builders can adjust this to their needs.

For a major portion of houses, construction begins the month of permit issuance. The remainder of homes breaks ground within three months, Census reports.

Permits are tracked in Census' monthly New Residential Construction release. This includes permits by building type as well as starts and completions. Data are arranged nationally; by

the four major Census regions (Northeast, Midwest, South and West); and by state, metro and county levels. (Or county-like groupings in New England.)

The number of permits is based on the number of housing units jurisdictions authorize. Permit data are collected from individual municipalities where available, or else counties, townships, or New England and Mid-Atlantic towns. As builders know, permits are on the public record, which makes them a highly accurate national as well as local indicator.

This statistic is based on a monthly survey of approximately 9,000 of the 20,000 permit issuing places in the United States. (The rest are surveyed annually.) When one of the jurisdictions doesn't reply to the survey, the missing information is filled-in using a separate survey of 900 places Census field representatives visit, or is statistically estimated using year-to-year trends.

A longer-term view may also be helpful for understanding industry dynamics. For example, new home sales hit a record in 2004 with 1.2 million singlefamily sales. But demand hadn't peaked; 1.6 million permits were approved for single-family units the same year. "These data underscore our view that builders are being more restrained in their business practices, focusing on 'build to order' rather than 'build to inventory," according to a UBS Investment research report that noted a trend over the last decade. The report added that the ratio of permits issued to new homes sold declined from 37 percent to 25 percent. This, UBS took to mean that there are fewer speculative permits being sought today. Whatever else this means, it solidifies permits as a leading indicator of sales.

Permit statistics only represent housing in places where permits are required, which excludes a Census-estimated three percent of jurisdictions. Up to two percent of permits never result in construction. At the local level, permits can come in bunches, so builders should be cautious of short-term trend assumptions.



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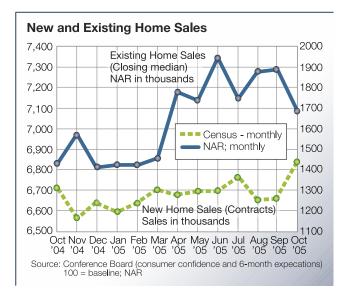
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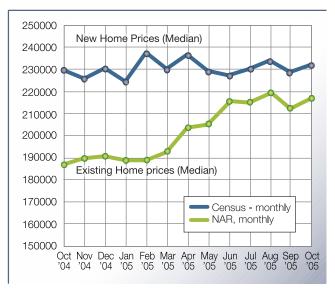
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Permits are "probably are not quite as reliable as starts, nationally, but are the best way to get more regional detail," says RBI's Haughey. After several months lag, permits are available across the nation by zip code.

Pros: Permits provide an accurate, leading look at pending starts and sales, and help gauge near-future housing supply.

Cons: Permits are still permits; total industry figures for starts are best for national trends.

Housing Starts

CSFB calls starts "critical to the housing market, since they are a leading indicator of sales and earnings." For the public home builders it tracks, improving starts are likely to be reflected in homebuilders' performance three to six months later. While most builders are more concerned with Main Street than with Wall Street, industry performance measured in starts gives an accurate read on industry momentum.

Seasonally adjusted housing starts for single- and multi-family units, again, are derived from Census' monthly New Residential Construction report. Starts are measured in all jurisdictions, including those that don't issue permits. And while permits generally predate starts, starts are valued indicator that helps predict housing coming online in the coming months.

Census field personnel check actual sites to fill-out surveys but data rely on private developer/builder response.

While national estimates are trusted, Census admits it "does not have a large enough sample size to make state or local area estimates." Therefore, aside from permits, all other statistics in the New Residential Construction release are tabulated no further down than the four major Census regions.

Pros: Starts are a forward-looking measure of construction actually underway, nationally and in four major regions.

Cons: Starts data are not as reliable an indicator as permits below the four major regions. Data do not reflect the value of the houses.

New-Home Sales

The Census covers sales for new single-family units. This is based on the Bureau's monthly New Residential Sales report, which is "probably one of the better and more timely and accurate statistics that the government collects," Carliner says.

Here, a sale is based on the "the signing of a sales contract or the acceptance of a deposit," whether the house has yet to start construction, is under construction or is complete. About one-quarter of houses are already completed. The rest, Census reports, "are evenly split between those not yet started and those under construction." The report is national and by the four major Census regions. Closings typically lag by one to two months.

For permits, sales and other reports, Census defines a single-family home as a detached house as well as attached units with floor-to-ceiling construction and other criteria generally describing a townhouse — as opposed to stacked multi-family units. The single-family definition excludes homes built for rent, homes built by the owner or on the owner's land... and manufactured homes.

Pros: An accurate estimation of near-current housing industry health.

Cons: Sales are recorded at varying, unknown stages of construction. Local data are unavailable.

Existing Home Sales

Along with new home sales, sales of existing homes are an important, if trailing, gauge of housing-market health. The National Association of Realtors releases its Existing Home Sales (EHS) report monthly. Unlike the Census' definition of a sale as a signed contract, NAR tallies sales based on closings. But the survey sample is large. NAR surveys 160 of 700 local partners to get data on 30 to 40 percent of existing home sales.

The final report estimates the total number of closings nationwide and for the four main census regions. Homes are separated by single-family, condos and co-op.

There are a couple of options for attempting to match Census and NAR sales volume for a given month in the real world. One is to compare the most recent NAR sales numbers to Census new-home sales data from a month or two ago. This discrepancy in definitions

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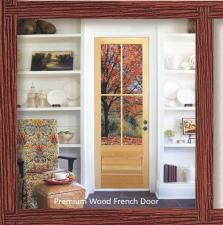


In warm weather, Low-E glass reflects the sun's energy and prevents it from entering the home.

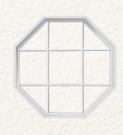


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led NAR to come with another alternative that serves as a partial solution. In January 2005, NAR began its Pending Home Sales report based on the date of contract signing, which makes for a roughly apples-to-apples comparison with the Census' report. Also like Census, this Index reports trends nationally and in the four major Census regions. The downside: Monthly estimates are expressed as an index (with 2001 set to equal 100); NAR does not release actual volume of units.

While this falls short of a direct comparison, the key issue remains trending, not number tracking. "The number itself does not really indicate too much," NAR economist Lawrence Yun says. Because what matters are the trends, or "whether conditions are improving or declining, and how strongly," Yun says.

Pros: A definitive if lagging view of existing home sales at closing and a new at-contract index to match Census' newhome data.

Cons: NAR doesn't release sales volume numbers for its Index, so there's no instant match-up with new home sales data.

New Single-Family Home Prices

It's useful for builders to track home prices, not just for the number but the trend. For example, a surge in prices beyond the population's norm could signal an undersupply or other issues related to affordability.

Therefore, builders should view price trends alongside sales. Census' monthly New Residential Sales release gives median and average sales prices of new single-family homes, again at the time of deposit or sales contract signing. The median price is more accurate for trending because it represents the midpoint; half the houses sold have a greater price and half have a lesser price. As with other data in this Census report, tabulations are national and for the four Census regions; the sample size isn't sufficient for state and local estimates.

Pros: Prices are a good general indicator relating to affordability and market opportunities.

Cons: State and local prices aren't reported.

Existing Single-Family Home Prices

Like Census, NAR reports median or midpoint prices each month as part of its Existing Home Sales release. Between mean and average, builders should track median prices. Data are reported nationally and the four census regions each month.

This indicator isn't leading but still is a necessary companion to new-home prices because trends can develop. For example, Carliner has noticed that existing home prices have been rising faster than new-home prices. "Is it because we sold more large vs. small houses, or more houses in expensive areas vs. less expensive areas?" He's not sure because "it's not easy to adjust for a perfect apples-to-apples comparison."

In response to this difficulty, NAHB and others routinely check the House Price Index from OFHEO, the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight.

"We prefer OFHEO because it's apples to apples, as opposed to looking at different sets of inputs," says Ivy Zelman, analyst in charge of CSFB's home building group. But this is a quarterly index. She finds it more reliable for tracking changes in home value, by nine Census regional divisions, and "many" metropolitan areas. RBI's Haughey believes the quarterly lag make it useful to still view Census and NAR data by the month.

Pros: NAR provides timely data on home prices for a majority of homes sold.

Cons: Monthly comparisons with new-home prices are difficult. OFHEO provides a quarterly analysis.

Housing Inventory

The total inventory of completed unsold homes and a monthly supply of unsold homes data provide a good gauge of housing supply. It's not a leading indicator but it's important. Too many completed, unsold homes in the ground can reflect poor sales, poor construction planning or too much of a debt burden to builders. Or, a bump in employment can shrink inventories and indicate a rise in demand.

Census' New Residential Sales provides both an absolute total as well as an estimate of how many months' supply of

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homes this represents. This months-ofsupply number is based on an annually adjusted sales rate. It uses the ratio of houses for sale to houses sold. NAR's EHS provides a similar measure for existing homes.

"Both inventories of new and existing homes are very important — one by itself is not enough," says CSFB's Zelman. "But we think the absolute number is more useful because the month's supply is dependent on sales. So if sales are slow one month, obviously, what you thought was a low level of supply can turn out to be a big month's supply."

"Inventory changes as a consequence of everyone's marketing mistakes," says Haughey. "If builders built too much and over-estimated what they could sell, it indicates what they did wrong the prior month. So while inventory is a lagging indicator, it can be used to help builders know what to do the next month."

Locally, builders can use the Realtors' Multiple Listing Service to calculate inventory, price and other factors.

Pros: A strong concurrent-to-lagging indicator of housing supply and future needs with analytical value.

Cons: More Census apples and Realtors' oranges in trying to mesh new and existing inventories.

Materials Prices

To the extent that the price of materials affects building costs — about 30 percent — this is a leading indicator. Top management would be wise to track material costs, specifically one of the

measures specifically suited to their type of residential building. The most comprehensive and efficient way to do this is through an appropriate, industry-specific Producers Price Index (PPI).

Unlike the Consumer Price Index associated with predicting inflation, PPIs reflect wholesale prices before added subsidies, taxes and distribution costs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks 8,000 PPIs based on more than 100,000 individual prices that span the economy. For these indexes, 100 is the baseline, tied to prices in 1986.

Within these massive digital catacombs, are industry-specific indexes of material and supply inputs to construction industries including. There are specific indexes for all construction, new construction, residential construction, single-unit construction and multi-unit construction. The "inputs" are similar for all residential indexes, but differ slightly due to weighting. For example, the residential construction index reflects less steel and concrete than the broader newconstruction index, which includes nonresidential construction. For most builders, the single-unit residential index most reflects their business because it includes single-family houses and floorto-roof units (townhouses), but excludes apartment buildings with stacked units.

"There's a little bit of many other indexes that go into making up each one of these," says BLS economist Antonio Lombardozzi, "and there's nothing publicly available to know exactly what goes into it." For instance, the residential PPI

has "at least 150 PPIs of material and supply inputs to the construction industries in it."

PPI data lag actual prices, because the data, issued roughly mid-month, reflect the prior month's prices. "But it's all relative. You have to define your references," RBI's Haughey says. "For a home builder, if material prices go up it can have a negative effect on pricing and of course starts and sales." Additionally, rising wholesale prices in the PPI tend to predict the CPI and can affect consumer sentiment "because people don't react for a month or two after they see prices move up or down," Haughey says.

This BLS information is practical and comprehensive for top-level viewing and detection of trends. Further investigation, builders can look to individual PPIs for items such as gypsum, cement, plumbing materials, and many kinds lumber. Private sources such as Crow's and Random Lengths provide additional depth in lumber analysis.

Pros: PPI material data are solid economic indicators of future home pricing and/or demand.

Cons: For day-to-day purchasing, seek out more timely commodity-specific services and markets.

Consumer Confidence/Sentiment

Builders value consumer perceptions. Two competing and roughly interchangeable indexes from two competing sources — the University of Michigan and the Conference Board — survey consumer attitudes that correlate with economic process.

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nomic ups and downs.

"At the end of the day, for our business, the most important things to know are where interest rates are going and the general psyche of the market at any one time," says Joe Riggs says, group president over roughly 20 percent of K. Hovnanian's \$4-plus billion home building business. "The better people feel about their situation, the more likely they are to make a large-scale purchase, and the better it is for our business."

The Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index both measure consumers' economic optimism or pessimism with slight differences. For example, Michigan asks consumers how they feel about their own situation. while the Conference Board's questions are more aimed at how people feel about the overall economy. Both ask for perceptions of current and future expectations.

"Watch especially the expectation component," Ken Goldstein, Conference Board economist, says. "Because if people think things are going to sour, they won't take on a mortgage." He advises those viewing the survey to pay more attention to sustained up-or-down trends than arcane survey intricacies.

Both survey sources offer, and sell, deeper industry-specific data. For example, in October, Michigan reported, that "favorable home buying attitudes fell to their lowest level since 1990, with more consumers complaining about high home prices than any time since 1982."

Choosing between the two sources, CSFB's Zelman slightly prefers Michigan but

NAHB Index

(currently single-family sales & traffic; sales expectations in six months)



A rating of 50 indicates that the number of positive or good responses received from the builders is about the same as the number of negative or poor responses. Ratings higher than 50 indicate more positive or good responses.

CONCLUSIONS



plumb waters. For measuring income, Census's household income surveys aren't highly reliable and don't include investment income. The Personal Income and Outlays report from the Bureau of Economic Analysis carries more weight. But after the last hurricane season, Mark Vitner, senior economist with Wachovia Securities, switched to wage and salary data, which "are somewhat less distorted than the income statistics." On affordability, NAR calculates an oft-used index that blends calculations of income, price and mortgage rates based on a 20 percent down payment some see as obsolete due to new mortgage products. NAR's index has veered completely 180 degrees off course since 1999 with a negative 0.86 correlation. Rather than ignore imperfect indicators — none are perfect — builders should instead understand as many as possible in triangulating a course by which to steer.

doesn't "necessarily think one is better."

"We have never found them to be very good predictors of what's going to happen," says Carliner. "If you take a look at the things that might influence and help to form consumer confidence, like unemployment rates, income and interest rates, you can look at directly and not wait for a survey. Often they're just measures of what's already happened."

Pros: Consumer attitudes toward the economy correlate with interest rates and employment.

Cons: It's not leading; even future expectations measures rely on past conditions. Other indicators are more immediate.

NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index

The NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index of builders' expectations has a "fair amount of predictive power that reaches about a quarter into the future," Carliner says. A recent Federal Reserve study found it more useful an indicator of housing strength, and economists across the housing economy refer to it. Suppliers to the industry who hope to gauge builder demand also use it. But it seems to have at least as much value as consumer readings. For this index, 50 is the break-even point; a value above 50 shows more confidence, below 50 shows less.

Pros: Builders are better economy-watchers than those questioned in general consumer surveys.

Cons: It's a lagging indicator and offers no direct measurement. **PB**

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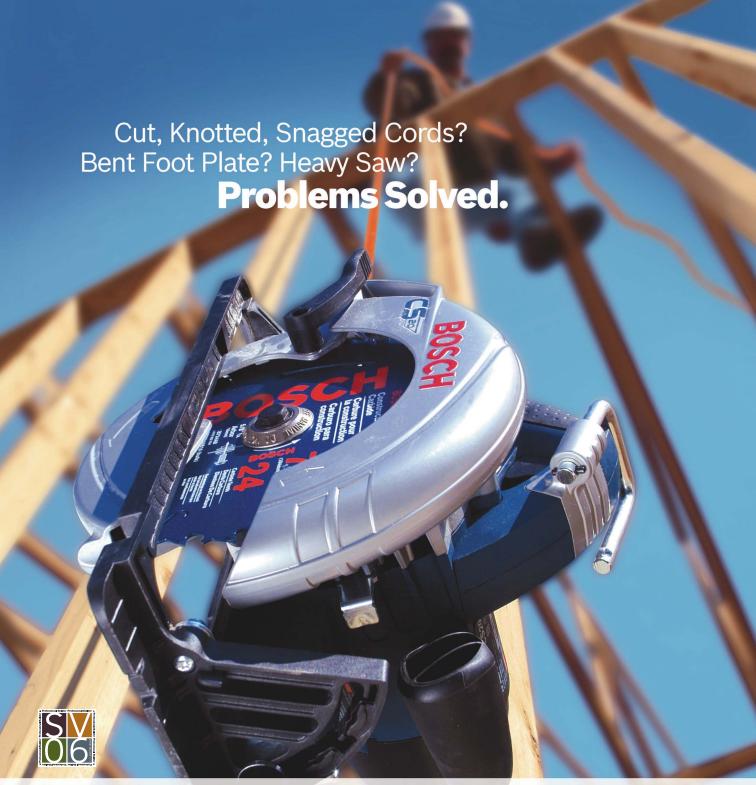


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Less than a mile from the nearly recovered French Quarter of New Orleans, snakes sleep under moldy carpets, and a foul wind whistles through the missing window panes of abandoned homes. Will home builders join in restoring this region to its rich heritage? Immense political, bureaucratic and psychological barriers stand in their way.



SEEDE

As you enter the lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, the smell hits you right away—the sick smell of death. Spend a few seconds inside one of these empty, desolate homes, filled with rotting couches, walls consumed by mold—and the smell will turn your stomach. A breeze carries a shard of aluminum flashing into the street. It clangs, then skids to a stop beneath a heap of downed electrical wires.



PEOPLE ARE
GOING TO HAVE
TO REBUILD. BUT
RIGHT NOW,
NOBODY HAS
BEEN GIVEN A
CLEAR PICTURE
OF WHAT THE
LEVEE SITUATION
IS GOING TO BE."

- MIKE CENTINEO



Months after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita tore through this region, few residents have come home. Home to what? For those who live outside less damaged areas, such as French Quarter, or St. Tammany Parish, the cavalry still hasn't come. Now, given the election-year fiscal caution taking place in Washington, it may never come. Those early stories about the exciting prospects of rebuilding the region have begun to seem like a cruel joke.

At this writing, thousands of home sites in the hardest hit parishes — Jefferson and St. Bernard, for example — have no water, no electricity and few occupants. On some exteriors, you can clearly see the flood line, the point where the putrid brackish water finally stopped rising. Red spray paint scrawled across the doorways of home after home tells the story in a way that words cannot. That's the color coding system used by the city to identify a home no longer suitable for human habitation.

"Even a red tag doesn't necessarily mean the house *must* be demolished," notes Mike Centineo, the director of permitting for New Orleans. "It depends on what people are willing to do to make their home livable again."

Centineo should know. He lost his own house to Katrina and has been living for months in a tiny cabin aboard a cruise ship in the Gulf. He treks to City Hall every day, past the National Guard troops still lingering in the courtyard, and does his best to put things right.

"We've got thousands of houses built in the 1950s, '60s and '70s that won't be practical to elevate," Centineo says. "People are going to have to rebuild. But right now, nobody has been given a clear picture of what the levee situation is going to be."

That "not knowing" is fueling rumors and

potential scams. Signs offering to buy houses with cash are often nailed to fences and doorways. "Somebody sent around some fright e-mails, saying that the government was going to bulldoze their neighborhoods" Centineo says, "then all of a sudden those signs popped up."

Some estimates now put the region's total loss at more than 100,000 homes. Most of these properties are simply rotting away in limbo, as the region languishes on a knife's edge between hope and despair.

Who's holding the knife? Bureaucrats and politicians. The key players: Louisiana legislators, insurance companies, FEMA — and the U.S. Congress.

Code wary

Lawmakers in Louisiana have proposed a statewide adoption of the International Residential Code. But the Louisiana Home Builders Association says that move would amount to the kiss of death for housing affordability.

"Even now, you just can't produce product that's affordable, especially in New Orleans," says Ronnie Kyle, president of the LHBA, as he watches a group of workers pour a cement pool on the back of a large custom home in the Country Club of Louisiana in Baton Rouge. "They are probably going to adopt new codes requiring 120 to 130 mph wind resistance. That can cause an 18 percent bump in the material and labor costs alone."

And those kinds of obstacles, says Kyle, have given a lot of regional builders second thoughts about moving into the New Orleans market — including himself.

"I'm only 70 miles away," Kyle says, "I've got the skilled crews, the knowledge and an understanding of the local culture, and I'm not going down there. It's just too much of a headache."

He turns to Carlos Alvarez, a local production builder who has just walked onto the site. "Hey Carlos, are you going to build in New Orleans?"

"Not me," says Alvarez. "I'm having enough

WEAKENED LEVEES?

Even if the Federal government comes through with massive funding to rebuild the New Orleans levees, the job just got tougher — and more expensive. That's because a new post-Katrina report on New Orleans soils by the University of California, Berkeley found them weakened by the storm surge. In fact, water seeping into soils under the levees was cited as one reason the walls breached where and when they did. The National Science Foundation sponsored the study, which suggests that the safety factor built into the existing levees is far too low for such a densely populated area. Researchers note that the engineering margin of error for constructing levees was established in the 1900s to protect farmland — not cities.

BIG BUILDERS: EASY DOES IT

Despite early excitement about major activity in the New Orleans region, the nation's biggest builders now appear to be playing it safe and slow.

In the days following Katrina, major production builders such as KB Homes came on fast and strong.

"New Orleans is a market that does traditionally 5,000 or 6,000 home starts a year," KB Home CEO Bruce Karatz told reporters on MSNBC. "I think we're gonna see somewhere in the neighborhood of 40,000 or 50,000, if not more. There's going to be a huge opportunity for many, many companies to participate in the rebuild, and we're certainly thinking about how we might be one of them."

Two months later, *Professional Builder* asked Karatz to comment on the KB plan. He sent us the following e-mail statement: "We have people on the ground trying to determine how we can participate in the rebuild. Big builders like KB Home, who know how to build homes, have something to add to the rebuild — but it could be months if not quarters away."

On December 6, however, KB announced a major joint venture with Shaw Louisiana to build an untold number of new homes in the New Orleans area. They have created a new division in Louisiana, and appointed Steve Davis — a native to the region and KB veteran, to head the effort. Shaw will handle the tough engineering problems KB is likely to face, such as preparing weak soils and identifying viable building sites.



Jeannie Dodd, executive director of the Louisiana Home Builders Association in Baton Rouge, notes that big builders coming to the region may have to create a market that doesn't necessarily exist yet and their product may have to address new codes.

"Who are they going to build for? Seniors?" Dodd asks. "You can't build senior housing when you have to build on stilts 13 feet in the air. FEMA is reissuing all of the flood maps in the area, so you can't even start building now, because you don't know what zone you're in."

Caroline Shaw, vice president of corporate communications for KB Home acknowledges "substantial challenges," to building in the region, but she says the company doesn't plan to target any particular niche.

The company won't be building in low-lying areas, Shaw says. Instead, they'll be

looking for regions that are less likely to be impacted by whether or not the New Orleans levee system is rebuilt.

"We're going to building communities for all kinds of people," she says. "The Shaw Group is helping us with the due diligence on properties, but I can tell you we're looking at one site within 30 minutes of downtown New Orleans.

"We'll be looking for lots of opportunities in the area, in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and elsewhere," Caroline Shaw adds. "At some point in the future we may also move into Mississippi. There's a need for permanent housing. Right now, all you see there are FEMA trailers."

Tommy Lewis, a real estate agent in New Orleans with Talbot Realty says other developers have been looking at land in the region — some with ties to other big builders. "The guy I'm dealing with in Baltimore deals with Pulte," he says. "They're sniffing around, looking at some mixed use."

But Pulte disavows any serious interest in the region. Their short response to *Professional Builder's* inquiry: "Pulte Homes does not build in the New Orleans area and has no current plan to do so," writes Mark Marymee, Director of Corporate Communications for the Michigan-based company, "Our nearest markets are Florida and Texas."

trouble getting labor up here. I'm calling Houston today to try to get an electrician. I have three electricians who work for me here, but they take weeks to do one house.

"FEMA's paying guys in New Orleans \$24 an hour," he adds. "Plus, they feed them and give them an allowance for fuel every week. I can't compete with that."

Which brings us to another major rebuilding challenge — finding people to do the work.

Labor woes

You can spend half the day driving around New Orleans neighborhoods and see maybe a half-dozen active construction crews — most of them roofers. Almost no one is breaking new ground. That's because many small builders are still playing catch-up.

"Right now we're not even building," says Phil Hoffman, owner of Hoffman Custom Built Homes in La Place, La. and president of the New Orleans Area Home Builders Association. "We're refurbishing family and friends. My own parents lost their house — and last week my dad died." He pauses. "I think the stress of losing everything and living in a trailer was just too much for him."

Hoffman notes that labor shortages are slowing new home completions by as much as eight weeks. He blames FEMA, in part, for essentially tossing greenbacks into the air and siphoning off trade laborers.

"FEMA is just tearing up the labor market," says Hoffman. "They're paying \$15.50 for basic labor, guaranteeing 60 hours. I'm paying \$12.50 an hour, and my guys are working harder. That's because they're paying for bodies. They just pay people to show up sometimes."

And others may be making far more than that on the government meal ticket, according to the locals. A bartender at The Jester, a New Orleans



HUNDREDS OF
FINELY DETAILED,
BUNGALOW-STYLE
HOMES like this one in
the lower Ninth Ward
ended up almost fully
submerged in the
flooding.

pizza joint, says her friends are getting paid \$25 to \$30 an hour to put tarps on roofs and haul garbage out of homes.

"It's terrible work," she says, "but the money is too good to say no."

Kyle sees one possible silver lining to the lure of FEMA's higher wages. "They're in the cleanup mode right now," he says. "Once they're out of that, they'll be releasing all of that labor — which

could help the LHBA. Those laborers will need insurance, and we're the largest provider of general liability insurance in the state."

No vacancy

Temporary housing for potential laborer also presents a huge problem for both builders and trades.

LHBA executive director Jeannie Dodd says FEMA has filled up literally every inch of viable ground with agency-issued trailers. Many residents also purchased RVs after the storm, so every RV Park and campground in the region is packed. Search Baton Rouge for a hotel room and you can't find a vacancy. Many hotels are now open in the French Quarter, but contractors must compete for these higher-priced rooms with tourists and others.

There has been talk of renovating some commercial buildings to house workers, and Centineo says. "We're trying to get some apartment complexes online for workers. There's one place with 700 units across the river that we're working on."

Dodd says the housing situation is keeping outof-state builders at bay. "We've had people calling from up north, saying they want to come down here and work this winter," she says, "but the hotels are all full of police and FEMA people and insurance adjusters."

DIGITAL DEMOLITION WATCH

Using a satellite-linked system for assessing storm damage, New Orleans officials have been inspecting and cataloguing more than 3,500 homes every day.

Mike Centineo's crews have made some amazing progress inspecting and logging the tens of thousands of homes damaged by Katrina. It's not just their end-

less pounding of the pavement. They're using a state-of-the-art software system from Accella, a company based in Devlin, Calif., to track and record every site visit.

The whole parcel and owner database is stored offsite in a hosted system that we run for New Orleans," notes Maury Blackman, vice president of sales for Accella. "It was there before the storm, so none of the data was destroyed. We keep the database at a secure loca-

tion in the Midwest."

Once homes are entered into the system, they automatically appear on a master, color-coded map. Green tags are okay

Manual York Rever

Labelland Carlot C

THIS GIS-LINKED ACCELLA DATABASE allows city officials to quickly catalogue damaged homes. They can zoom in all the way to the block level.

for habitation. Yellow are repairable. And red tags indicate extensive damage — homes that may need to be demolished. The most impressive feature: the ability to

zoom in to a neighborhood or even a single street. The software is linked to a Global Information System (GIS), and accessed online.

Potentially, builders could use the system to identify tear down properties, but at this time Centineo says there's no such access for private firms.

However, you can find damage assessment for any specific property provided you know the street address.

Visit the city website (www.cityofno.com) and look under "damage assessment."





YOU WILL PROBABLY SEE SOME HIGHRISES, BUT UNLESS THEY'RE **GOVERNMENT** SUBSIDIZED. THEY WON'T HAPPEN, YOU JUST CAN'T **PRODUCE PRODUCT** THAT'S AFFORDABLE. **ESPECIALLY IN** NEW ORLEANS."

- RONNIE KYLE



Insurance Gap

Those adjusters have their hands on a key source of reconstruction money — flood and wind insurance. For residents who had federal flood insurance — and many on higher ground in places such as St. Bernard Parish did not — coverage caps at \$250,000.

That amount hasn't been adjusted since 1994, and FEMA officials now estimate that more than half of New Orleans area homes won't be fully covered. In builder language, that means that few potential homebuyers are going to come to the

table with enough insurance cash to afford a moveup home in a good location.

And in the outlying parishes the insurance coverage becomes even more spotty.

"About 65 percent of people in St. Bernard Parish had no flood insurance," notes Morgan Palmisano of Total Recovery, an environmental mitigation firm based in Harvey, La., with an office in St. Bernard. "A lot of them are just planning to have us gut the houses and clean them out so they can move back in."

Palmisano notes, however, that FEMA may re-

IMPENDING SHOCK

Walk into the Home Depot in Baton Rouge and you'd hardly know the town just exploded to the population level it should have hit in 2035. Baton Rouge's housing stock fared better in the hurricane than New Orleans, and despite the influx of evacuees from the East, there's little sign of a booming demand for new construction. Air conditioners, appliances and drywall are piled high, but the contractor's desk is dead empty.

"We're selling more drywall than usual and a lot of OSB, but that's all really," says Denise Thomas, a sales associate. "It hasn't made that much of a difference."

Allen Constantine, owner of La Place Concrete, about a half hour west of New Orleans, says the same is true of concrete — there has been little bump in demand. But almost any bump will bring a rude surprise to builders, because the supply is limited.

"We can't get the powder," says Constantine, "because it's all going to China, and we have to pay a 50 percent dumping fee for anything from Mexico. Now the port of New Orleans is closed, and that's not helping either."

Some builders have already started stockpilling materials, and if builder Phil Hoffman is right about what's coming, they may be patting themselves on the back in a few months.

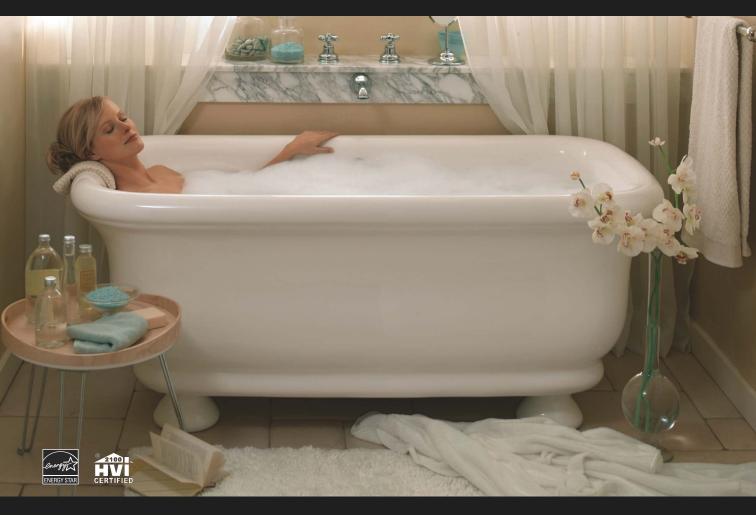
"The push is just starting," Hoffman says. "We're just at the tip of the iceberg with regard to materials. But when those insurance checks hit, we'll be in a major shortage.

"Lumber spiked a month ago," he adds, "then dropped off, so now it's only up about 4 percent. We still see price hikes in almost everything - sheetrock, insulation, vinyl, copper, electrical and plumbing. And it's only going to go higher."



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draw floodplain maps for the region, a move that could require residents returning to the area to raise the elevation of their homes.

They will also be required to buy federal flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program. If FEMA makes such changes homes that were covered by insurance may be eligible for an additional \$30,000 grant to cover meeting those mandated code changes. Uninsured homes get nothing.

"Right now, I'd say that of 60,000 residents in St. Bernard about 45,000 people will come back," Palmisano says. "I know these people. If they require them to raise the homes, only about a third of them will return."

Wayne Wellmeier, a builder and remodeler in Metairie, La., says that even those homeowners eligible for the \$30,000 code change insurance from FEMA will find it falls far short of the real cost of elevating a home.

"This is not really about rebuilding if you have

to elevate houses," Wellmeier says. "You can't just put them back on the slab. All you have left is the slab, maybe some of the structure, and the HVAC, because most people down here have their HVAC in the attic. What you're really doing is adding 50 percent to the cost of building the house from the ground up."

Even owners of luxury homes in New Orleans neighborhoods such as Lakeview, made the mistake of not purchasing additional flood insurance. Now they can't rebuild to the same value. According to the *Times Picayune*, Hibernia Insurance had 288 New Orleans customers with homes worth more than \$250,000. Only three purchased optional additional flood coverage.

Subsidies needed

For the thousands of homeowners whose insurance amounted to less than \$250,000, the prospects of building new are virtually non-existent.

In the New Orleans area, according to the Real

TOXIC CONFUSION

Living next door to industrial sites adds another layer of concern for local residents rebuilding - or contractors building new.

One of the worst sites is near the Murphy Oil tanks in St. Bernard Parish. The EPA has conducted tests in the region, but those results won't be published for a few weeks.

Many residents in the oil-soaked neighborhoods have already settled for a cash payment from the company.

"I think the average payment is about \$30,000 per home," says Morgan Palmisano of Total Recovery. "Crude oil is not a big problem in terms of contamination. Mother Nature takes it back. It's the heavy metals that are more of a concern, and none of tests I've seen so far have found elevated levels in this area."

For residents in the general area, but not the immediate proximity of visible threats such as oil spills, getting an accurate read on how much nasty stuff reached their neighborhood is proving tough. Even the EPA's own staffers have criticized that organization's handling of the pollution assessment for the region. For example, regulators are not testing for dangerous petroleum additives such as benzene.

Mary Ann and Ted Bonura returned to their home in mid-November and were told by company officials that the Murphy oil spill hadn't reached their neighborhood.

They dispute that claim.

"We definitely had oil residue in our home," says Mary Ann. One of our neighbors said the streets were shiny like an oil slick, but they came through with a power washer."

The Bonuras had full flood insurance, so they're preparing to move back home whatever the final word on pollutants. And if they're like other residents we spoke to in the area, they may not pursue their hunch about contamination. They don't want to

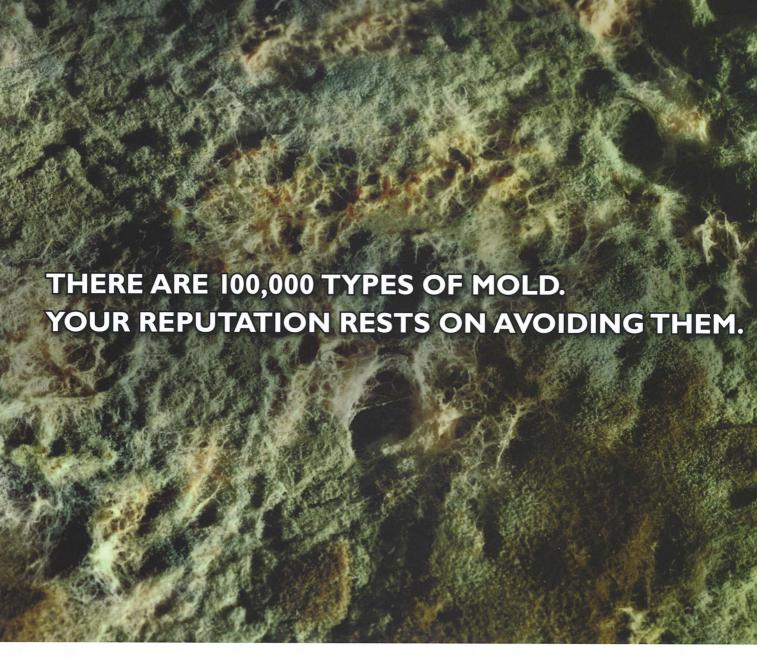
see the area declared uninhabitable.

Instead, they're starting the process of gutting the house themselves, which may be the point at which they are exposed to the greatest potential harm from both industrial — and natural — toxins

"We had to get tetanus shots and all this protective gear to do this work," Mary Ann Bonura says. "You can only stay in there for a few minutes. The doctor told us we should also take antihistamines a few minutes before we go inside."



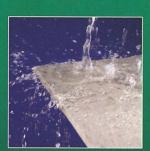
FEMA INSTRUCTED MARY ANN AND TED BONURA to get tetanus shots and take antihistamines before cleaning mud and debris from their home in St. Bernard Parish.







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INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODES

Important Information on 2006 IRC Changes

Hardibacker® Cement Board with Moldblock™ Protection Meets International Residential Code Changes; Moisture-Resistant Gypsum Board (Greenboard) Does Not



With increasing consumer awareness of moisture and mold problems, builders and installers are taking notice. In response, the focus on better building practices has shifted from moisture-resistant wallboard (greenboard) to

cement board. This is a trend that's unlikely to change. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) already cautions against the use of greenboard in wet areas, as do several builders' associations and local building codes. Now, the International Residential Code (IRC) is making it official.

Effective January 2006, the IRC will no longer recognize the use of moisture-resistant gypsum backing board as a wall panel or as a tile backer substrate in wet areas (Section R702.4.2, 2004 Supplement to IRC). The International Residential Codes – written every three years – cover the design of and materials used in construction of detached single- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings not more than three stories in height. Forty-five states have already adopted all or part of the IRC, although it's up to state, local and municipal jurisdictions to adopt these codes as written or to make amendments.

Although greenboard is commonly used in wet areas, it's certainly not best practice. The paper facing serves as a perfect food source for mold and does not offer adequate moisture resistance. A new alternative on the market is paperless wallboard. However, paperless wallboard contains gypsum, which is known to disintegrate with continuous moisture exposure, so it addresses only part of the problem and doesn't provide a true solution.

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When the International Residential Code change takes effect in January, consider Hardibacker Cement Board with Moldblock Protection for your wet area walls and help protect your reputation and avoid costly callbacks. It's *the* paper- and gypsum-free alternative.







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- PHIL HOFFMAN



Estate Market Data Center, home prices have risen 53 percent over the past 10 years. That's much less than the national average of 79 percent, but enough to hurt here, where the median income is about \$27,000 and a quarter of the population lives (or *lived*) below the poverty line.

"Without government assistance, it's hard to build affordably," says Hoffman. "Then there's the zoning. Around here, the minimum lot size has to be 80 feet. I'm paying \$50,000 each for those lots. I asked the local planning guy why we couldn't have zoning for 50 foot lots and he said it's because they don't want it. They don't want it!

"I built a \$135,000 house last year for a young couple," he continues. "Now that was one of the most rewarding projects I've ever done. You've never seen somebody so grateful. But most of the time I can't afford to do that."

Kyle says building homes for low-income residents is simply an economic impossibility for a private builder — unless they get government help.

"A lot of the displaced people are either going to rent or live in substandard housing," he says. "You will probably see some high-rises, but unless they're government subsidized, they won't happen. You just can't produce product that's affordable, especially in New Orleans."

Hoffman adds that in this scenario the department of Housing and Urban Development needs to step in. "I would be willing to build HUD hous-

ing, as would a lot of builders," he adds, "if the government is willing to do their part."

Political roulette

In faraway Washington, D.C., politicians are haggling over funding that may ultimately spell life and death for the hardest hit areas of New Orleans. And so far, signs are not good. The linchpin in the deal: Unless the feds fund the enormous price tag (some estimates suggest \$30 billion) for upgrading and repairing the New Orleans levee system to Category 5 hurricane readiness, businesses won't return.

The state is already deeply in debt, facing a new \$3.7 billion dollar bill from FEMA, as part of its required share of disaster relief.

Both local and state politicians have gone to Washington to plead their case. But even if Senators can gain the support of new Hurricane Rebuilding coordinator Donald Powell, there's no guarantee that President Bush will go along with the cost.

State Senators have asked for \$250 billion in aid to the region, but that astronomical request couldn't have come at a worse time. The republican-controlled Congress — both the House and Senate — has developed a sudden interest in deficit reduction. That change of heart makes acquiring money for an intangible such as reconstruction an extremely tough fight.



ALTHOUGH LARGELY OVERLOOKED BY THE NEWS MEDIA.

the outer parishes suffered some of the most devastating damage. Several of the homes next to this eerie wreck in St. Bernard Parish have completely vanished.

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- CARLOS ALVAREZ



Without jobs waiting in New Orleans, locals might stay put in Houston, or Baton Rouge, or Austin. In that scenario, some have suggested that the city — primarily the French Quarter — could become an island of tourism surrounded by small communities of second homes and vacation get-

Seizing the high ground

When and where will the bulk of any new home construction take place? Unless things change, that answer is obvious: on the high ground.

Only 20 percent of New Orleans remained above the flood waters. These sections, such as St. Tammany Parish and the West Bank, are now perceived as safe zones for building.

Builders have already reported a burst of housing sales in these locations. But so far, the type of product is fairly narrow: move-up market rate homes and condos. With land prices in these hot spots rising, affordability is slipping even further awav.

At the same time, architects and developers want a piece of the rebuilding action. At a meeting in New Orleans in November, they discussed the possibility of New Urbanist-style development in the region.

Their goals, however admirable, face the same litany of intractable problems — levee protection,



LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE DEVELOPED A CRYPTIC SYSTEM for

identifying the level of damage to homes. Emergency teams used spray paint on doors to identify which ones might contain trapped residents. Some insurers, we were told by frustrated residents, have refused to cover the cost of paint removal (or door repair if doors were broken down).

INTO THE FRAY

Despite all the obstacles, New Orleans badly needs help, both in renovation and remodeling and new housing. If you're ready to head south for the winter, here's the basic tool kit of information you need to work in New Orleans and the surrounding

1. Licensing. You need a Louisiana contractor's license to build in the state. According to Ronnie Kyle, "to get a license in Louisiana, you must have a net worth of \$10,000, plus an audited financial statement."

Get the full information here:

www.lslbc.state.la.us

2. Permits. To do teardown and rebuild work in greater New Orleans area, each Parish has slightly different requirements. Contact the individual parish for specific rules.

Parish Permitting Offices

Orleans: 504-658-7100 Jefferson: 504-736-6957 St. Bernard: 504-278-4310 St. Tammany: 985-898-2574

3. Labor. Unless you bring your own labor, you're going to need help finding skilled and unskilled workers.

Louisiana Dept. of Labor: 800-481-6762

www.laworks.net

Small Business Administration: 800-659-2955

www.sba.gov

4. Other Questions/Information. Looking for more specific information about housing, permitting, demolition, disposal or other issues? Try these city websites first.

Municipal Websites

New Orleans: www.cityofno.com Jefferson Parish: www.jeffparish.net St. Tammany Parish: www.stpgov.org St. Bernard Parish: www.st-bernard.la.us

St. Charles Parish: www.stcharlesgov.net

St. John Parish: www.sjbparish.com



ON MANY HOMES. **FEMA HAS POSTED**

NOTICES telling the owners that they must be present in order to complete the disaster inspection. But with most homes rotting from mold, owners have nowhere to stay in the city. The result: long delays in disaster assistance for displaced residents.



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"PEOPLE THAT FELT LIKE MOV-ING TO SLIDELL, THEY'RE GONNA STAY. A LOT OF PEOPLE HERE ARE BEING RUN OUT, AND THEY'RE GONNA BE SORRY THEY LEFT. THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME." -MONROE RIMERE

zoning, affordability — plus the daunting challenge of retaining the unique character of New Orleans rather than gentrifying it and destroying the uniqueness created by centuries of natural evolution.

Andres Duany, the noted architect whose upscale Seaside resort has come to symbolize both the strengths and shortfalls of New Urbanism, acknowledges that reconstruction could exclude all but the more affluent buyers.

He told the editors of *Healthy Building News* that "the cost of coastal rebuilding designed to withstand another Katrina makes affordable housing on that land very difficult, and may even be beyond the reach of middle class property owners."

For local builders, discussions of citywide planning seem far removed from the moment's gritty reality of teardowns, rebuilds and completing current projects. Even if tides change and a building boom takes off, local firms lack the infrastructure to meet additional demands.

"We normally pull 17,000 permits for the whole state," Kyle says, "but the majority of our builders are remodelers or guys who do three or four plans. I think our largest builder does about 800 units. There are probably five builders in this whole area that do 100 or more homes."

If the levees are repaired, Kyle sees a more optimistic future for the Big Easy. "I think a lot of people will go back, but New Orleans will be a smaller city," he says. "Those levees are especially impor-

tant to businesses.

"People will forget quickly," he adds. "After seven or eight years, the hurricane won't be on their minds at all. And you have to remember we haven't had a hurricane like this in 65 years, although we may be in year five of a 20 year period of intense activity."

On the other hand, some locals are convinced that parts of the city, such as New Orleans East, will face the bulldozer — or become ghost towns.

"That's where you're going to see the biggest abandonment," says Palmisano. "I expect you'll have about 40,000 to 50,000 homes where people simply collect their [insurance] check and turn their backs and walk away."

In the meantime, the few builders lucky enough to still have intact crews and offices intend to tackle the situation one teardown, one house at a time.

"I spend the whole day from seven in the morning on, just meeting with people," Hoffman adds, "adjusters, subs, people who want an estimate. This is way too big. It's an opportunity to have an economic boom like we've never seen, or an absolute bust." **PB**

LOG ON Keep up with our continuing coverage of New Orleans by visiting Matthew Power's blog at

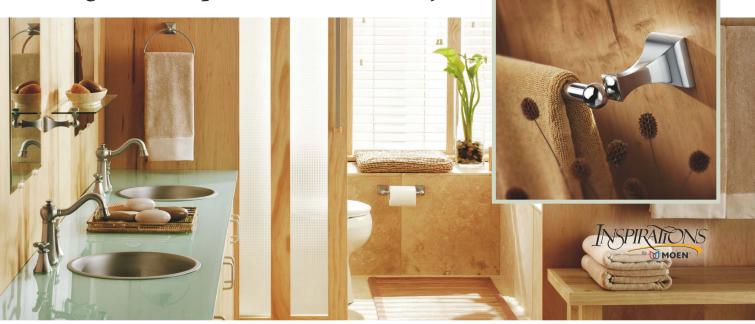
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Delivering the right brands gives you

a real advantage. Here's an easy way to take the "mass" out of "mass marketing." Rather than choosing from a limited number of standard kitchen solutions, builders can benefit from having a larger portfolio of appliances to put in their homes. This not only allows more options to fit standard home plans — it's an easy way to satisfy the wants and needs of potential homebuyers. Maytag Builder Sales can help you answer the needs of homebuyers because we offer more diverse, quality brand names including Jenn-Air, Maytag and Amana. We understand consumer trends, so we can help you anticipate the appliances homebuyers want to personalize

their homes and fit their families' needs — without compromising your budget, timeline or building plans with custom solutions.

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A new home is a clean slate. And choosing quality brands reflects on every aspect of your project. New homebuyers are drawn to quality brands that they trust and that offer unique features to fit their lifestyles.

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Proactive Solutions

>> BY FELICIA OLIVER, SENIOR EDITOR

Together for the Common Good

Cohousing offers communal living without the ideology.

Communes conjure up notions of sharing common spaces, resources and socio-political interests with a similar group of cohabitants.

But collaborative housing, or cohousing, strikes a balance between privacy and community. Homeowners share common areas that may include

PHOTO: ALAN THORNTON/STONE

a dining room (where optional communal meals are shared two or three times a week), kitchen, meeting rooms, recreation facilities, workshop and children's play area — while maintaining their own complete, autonomous housing units (with kitchens, living rooms, etc.). There is no shared communal economy.

Cohousing communities are planned and managed by residents who come from all walks of life — singles, couples, families, empty nesters and retirees — who are committed to living as a community. The typical cohousing community has 20 to 30 single-family homes that face each other along a pedestrian street or are clustered around a common courtyard.

Cohousing encourages social interaction with neighbors and can reduce

feelings of suburban isolation, providing a surrogate social network and support system for individuals that live far from their extended families. Neighbors watch out for each other and their property.

Cohousing often utilizes an environmentally sensitive design that empha-

> sizes pedestrian access and optimized open space. It promotes conservation because more resources, such as tools, cars and books, can be shared.

> Cohousing communities have historically taken anywhere from two to eight years to complete. But Jim Leach of Wonderland Hill Development Company of Boulder, Colo., has pioneered a "streamlined model" of development. A national team of cohousing professionals consults with

future residents and handles the technical aspects of the project, including building and development, engineering, architecture and design, project management and group process.

Cohousing began in Denmark in the late 1960s, and spread to North America in the late 1980s, around the time husband and wife architects Kathryn McCamant and Chuck Durrett wrote, "Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves," after studying and visiting more than 50 of these Scandinavian communities. According to the Cohousing Association of the United States, there are more than 100 cohousing communities completed or in development in the U.S. and Canada, with high concentrations in California, Colorado, Washington and Massachusetts.



>> BY LAURA BUTALLA, SENIOR EDITOR

KB and Stewart Form Collaboration

KB Home and Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia announced a joint collaboration on the design of new homes. The first community designed by the two will take place in Cary, N.C. and will feature approximately 650 homes. The community will include single-family homes, ranging from 1,500 to 4,100 square feet and priced from the low \$200s to the mid \$400s. The homes will be inspired by Stewart's own homes in New York and Maine.

According to KB Home, Stewart's influence will be evident in many aspects of the homes, including the floor plans, exterior design, interior floor plans and furnishings. Homebuyers will have the added advantage of choosing Stewart's favorites among the flooring, faucets, light fixtures, cabinetry, countertops and other items available at the KB Home Studio in Raleigh, N.C.

>> BY PAUL DEFFENBAUGH, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Group Service

Builder Sourcing hopes to capitalize on increased interest in builder buyer groups.

Builder Sourcing touts itself

as the "Next New National Home Builder." For a business that is not strictly a home builder and is confined primarily to the Front Range of Colorado, that boast may seem broad. Builder Sourcing is a buyers group of 16 small to mid-sized builders closing approximately 2,000 homes a year. The group is served by 20 suppliers. The timing may be right for achieving such an ambitious goal.

Because the national builders have begun to achieve success in their relationships with vendors, interest in buyers groups has risen. Barry Rutenberg, owner of Barry Rutenberg Homes, Gainesville, Fla., chaired the National Association of Home Builders building materials subcommittee from 1994 to 2000. According to him, "The nationals are getting better and better at purchasing and starting to get significant cost advantages over local builders." One of the results is that smaller suppliers are more interested in selling to small and medium builders because they have more profit potential. "The dynamics in the industry are changing," he says.

Charles Schneider, founder and CEO of Builder Sourcing, is trying to capture the wave of those changing dynamics. His company leverages the strength of many builders, providing benefits which include

- Material cost reductions
- More expertise in negotiating with suppliers
- Ability to control material cost increases
- Strong communication between builders and suppliers
- Access to decision-makers for suppliers

Small and medium builders can tend to feel ignored by their suppliers, but

Schneider quickly learned suppliers were very interested in reachthis segment. "People had interest for four reasons," he says. It's a bigger segment; those builders tend to specify a higher grade product; it's a lower risk for suppliers who can afford to lose a client without losing all the business; and the supplier has direct access to the decision-maker.

For builder clients, the advantages are obvious — cost savings which allow them to compete more effectively against the nationals. Talk to the builder clients, though, and they dismiss the cost savings fairly quickly. What gets their attention is the level of service they get. Michael New. president of InVision Homes in Parker, Colo., says, "I have a bigger voice with my supplier than I could alone.... I can call

someone if there is an issue and talk to someone who can help."

George Hess agrees. Hess is president of Vantage Homes in Colorado Springs, which serves the move-up buyer. Vantage Homes will close about 180 homes next year. "I want my people focused on process, procedure, and manufacturing. If they're focusing only on the bottom line, something's going to get dropped." For Hess, Builder



"THE NATIONALS
ARE GETTING
BETTER AND
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PURCHASING AND
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BUILDERS."

BARRY RUTTENBERG

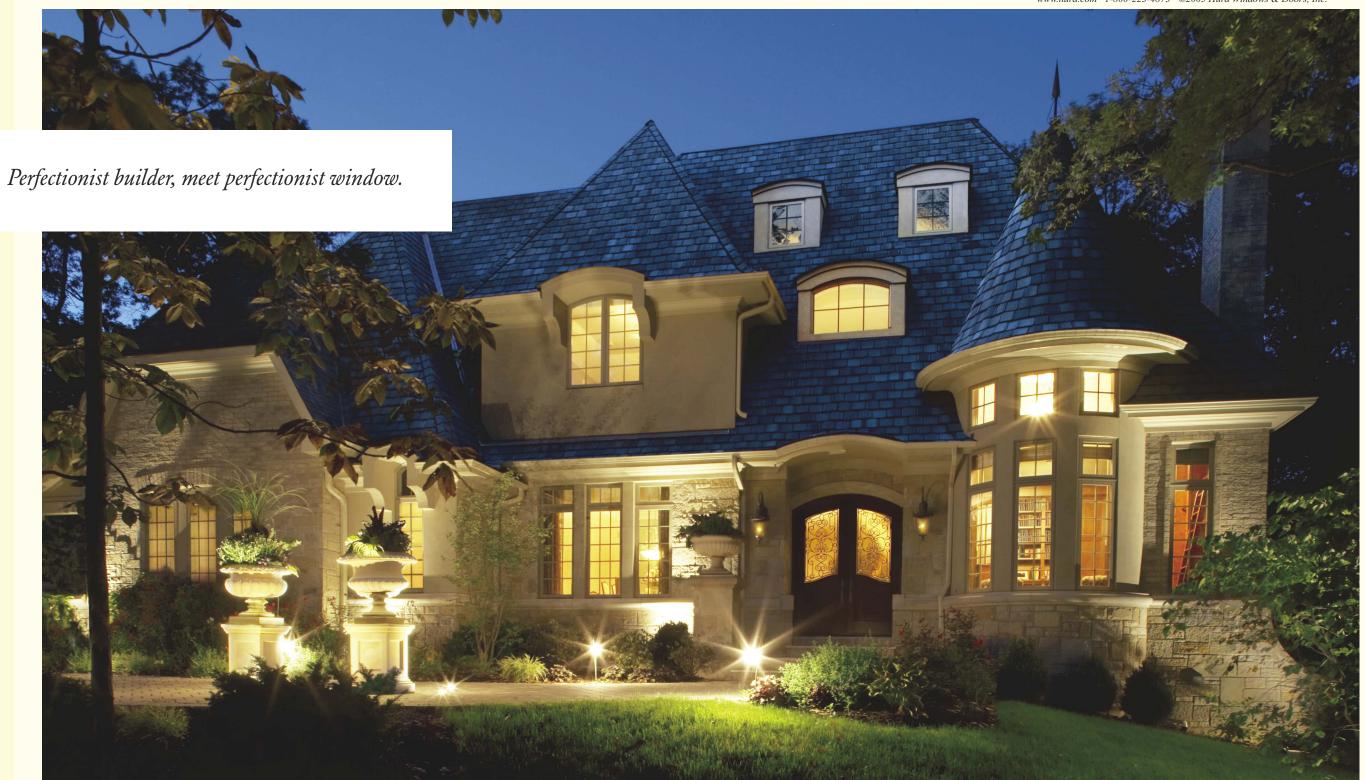
Sourcing serves the role of a consultant that will negotiate better rebate programs and better buying processes, working hand-in-hand with his purchasing department.

Currently, Builder Sourcing's 20 suppliers cover almost all the major product categories. Windows Atrium Doors-Colorado is the window supplier, and general manager Jimmy Sisco expects 75 percent of his growth from Builders Sourcing to be with new customers. He can talk to the decisionmakers at a time when they are evaluating their product selections.

For Sisco, it is also the service quotient that he finds most appealing. "I want to know how we can partner between builder and supplier to better serve the end user," he says. "The goals are more aligning with this group. We want the end user to be delighted

with the product."

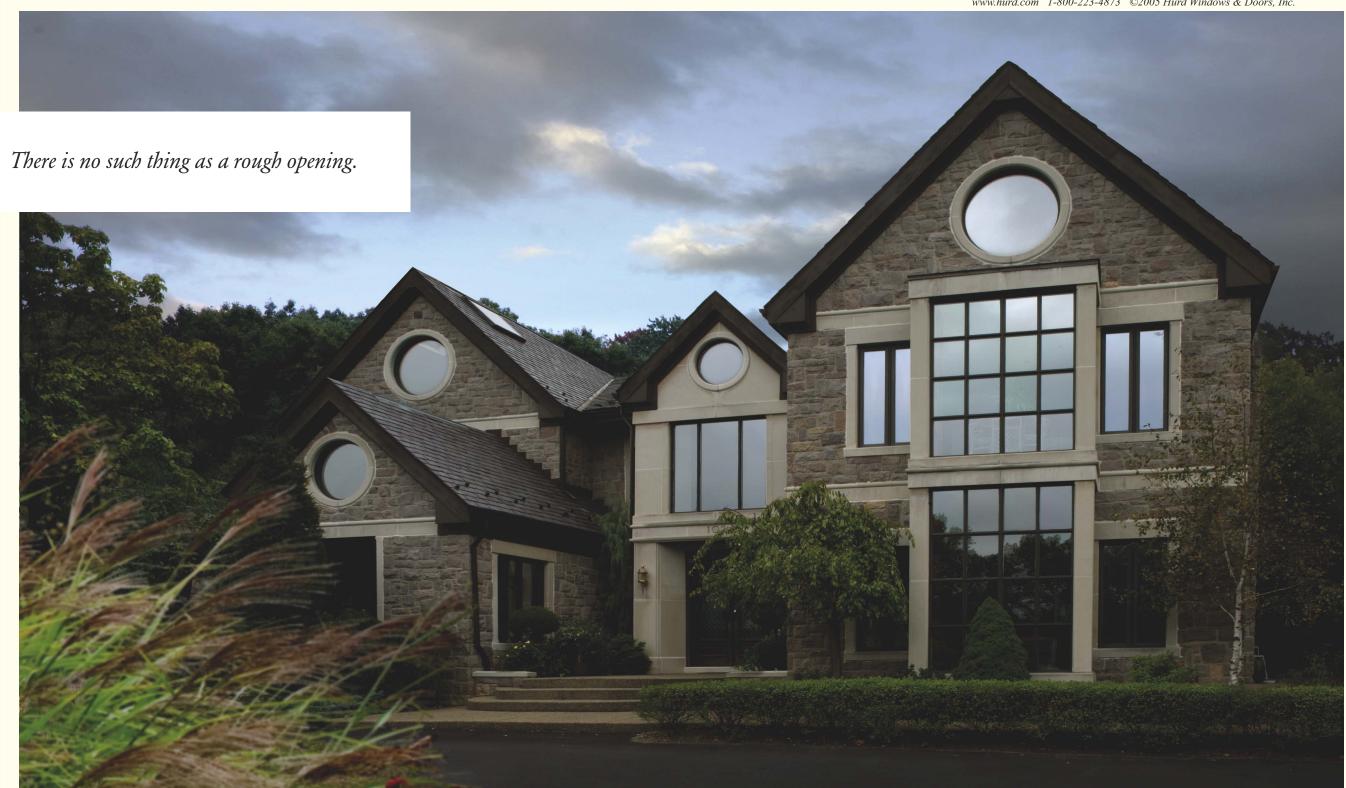
In an environment of increasing competition and rising material costs, small to mid-sized builders will continue to evaluate their vendor options. As Rutenberg says, "It's not the time to be overconfident. It's the time to be respectful. It's also the time to push new ideas." Buyers groups, such as Builder Sourcing, may be one of the new ideas that stick.





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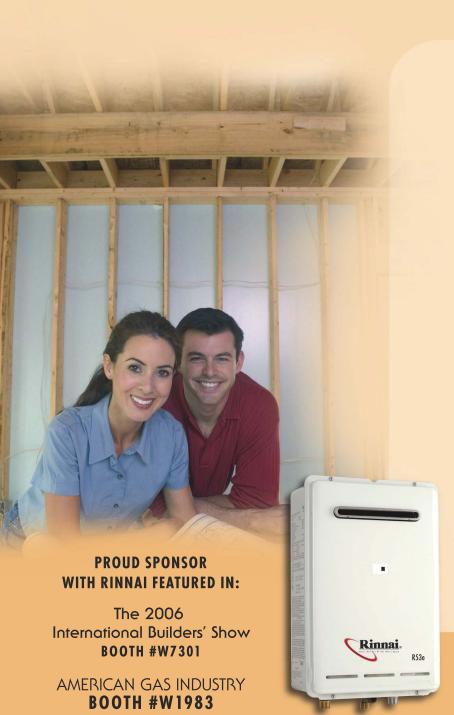




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Best In American Living Award

Home of the Year

Urban loft living done right

Addressing space constraint, affordability and mixed-use, Artisan Homes' Lofts on Central makes it all happen.

Eric Brown of Artisan Homes took a sketch on a napkin for developing loft living in downtown Phoenix to William Hezmalhalch Architects. The result was the winner of the Home of the Year in the Best in American Living Awards — Artisan Homes' Lofts on Central.

"It was that vision of creating a loft style unit," William Hezmalhalch Architects' Jeff Chelwick, principal in charge for Lofts on Central, says. "Giving the prospective buyers flexibility to do what they want within the walls that the builder has put in is an incredibly unique, exciting concept."

Artisan Homes first developed urban loft living on Osborn Street, a mile and a half north of the Lofts on Central, but mixed-use was a major part of Brown's true vision of urban loft living and Osborn doesn't offer retail space. Central does.

"I did Osborn first because the only high-end condo buildings were just down the street and I had views of the Phoenix Country Club and the mountains," Eric Brown, president of Artisan Homes in Phoenix, says.

Making a difference

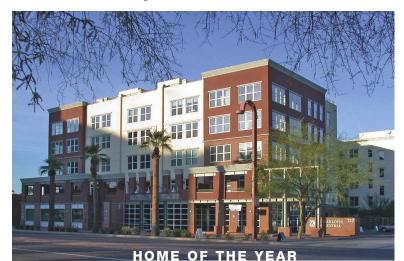
Downtown Phoenix was in need of revitalization. "The city was desperately looking for someone to start doing housing downtown," Brown says. "The other thing was mixed-use buildings were missing. I really wanted to do something that I thought would make a difference for downtown Phoenix."

The Central site was a vacant lot for many years. While Artisan Homes was marketing Lofts on Osborn, potential buyers wanted to know if there would be lofts built on Central Avenue. "The market in Phoenix had been stagnant for years," Brown says. "Nothing was moving, but I liked this location because we're right in between downtown and midtown."

Lofts on Central is in the heart of the Central Corridor, within walking distance to a historical residential district, adjacent to the Phoenix Art Museum, Central Library, Margaret Hance Park and near the future site of the Light Rail transportation system.

"We selected this site because it offered someone an urban experience," Brown says. "The only thing really lacking was no restaurants within walking distance, so that's why we decided it was important to do our own restaurant downstairs."

In addition to Cheuvront's Wine Bar and Café



A VIEW OF LOFTS ON CENTRAL shows Cheuvront's Wine Bar and Cafe on the ground level.

Platinum for Best Attached Urban, Infill; Platinum for Best Attached Home 20 units per acre and over

Project Name: Artisan Lofts on Central

Location: Phoenix, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: William Hezmalhalch Architects,

Inc., Santa Ana, Calif.

Builder/Developer: Artisan Homes, Phoenix, Ariz. Interior Designer: Artisan Homes, Phoenix, Ariz. Land Planner: William Hezmalhalch Architects, Inc.,

Santa Ana, Calif.

Square Footage: 1367 to 2662



Home of the Year

THIS LOFT SHOWS

HOW ONE OWNER

designed his kitchen

and dining room

alongside a spiral

the second floor.

staircase leading to

on ground level, Artisan Homes added a hair salon and law office on the second floor, creating a convenient and urban setting for buyers.

Most mixed-use buildings have such a high lease rate it becomes hard for retailers to rent out the space. Or loft buildings are built in areas not ready for fully engaged live/work urban living. "We decided to build the cost of retail space into the homes," Brown says. "If we leased it for a dollar, we made a dollar."

Occupying the retail space before the building was complete was important to Artisan Homes. When a local state senator, Ken Cheuvront, wanted to open a wine bar, Artisan was happy to oblige its ground level retail space to this venture. "It was a perfect complement to the building," Brown says.

Balancing design

The concept of loft living can vary. For Artisan Homes it meant mimicking the true warehouse converted to lofts found in New York City. The structure comprises a variety of materials, such as sandblasted concrete blocks, wood framing and concrete slab. The concrete slab starts at ground level for the garage, lobby and restaurant. Sandblasted concrete blocks and wood framing stack above that, creating the old warehouse building look.

The U-shaped building has a secured entry courtyard on the ground level. By adding architectural elements such as brick and concrete veneer steel pipe railing, and flat roofs, the designers made the building complement the urban neighborhood. "Architectural metal detail around the retail storefront and decks offer an added layer of detail to the elevations," William Hezmalhalch Architects' Karl Dakteris, project architect for





Artisan Lofts on Central says.

As with true loft living, each buyer starts with a shell. "We didn't build out the units because we wanted buyers to make it their design," Brown says. The different structural choices created varying bearing points, so Artisan Homes could offer 13 floor plans in all. It was up to each buyer to create the design elements for his or her loft. Artisan provided the option to finish out the unit following the buyer's custom designs.

"What's exciting about these is how the buyers finished off the units with their interior designers," Dakteris says. "Thirteen floor plans were offered with a total of 40 units, so there's a lot of variety."

Units were offered on all four floors. Select units had access to 14 private balconies on the rooftop. A community balcony on the rooftop provides a barbeque and kitchenette area and an outdoor fireplace.



ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A FINISHED KITCHEN with custom lighting, stainless steel appliances and custom tiles above the countertops.

Most of the buyers were singles or couples who wanted their units to have the open floor plan of classic lofts. "In a true loft, they should have tremendous flexibility," Brown says. There was space for upstairs bedrooms, but most buyers opted not to have them.

Each buyer had the option to allow Artisan to finish out the unit with optional closets, extra rooms, and shelving units as well. "We typically finished out in this building," Brown says.

Unique design elements within the units created the authentic urban loft living effect. Exposed ductwork, block walls and wood beams matched classic New York City loft style. Conduit on the walls, Glu Lam beam edge and brick façade appeared in many units as well. Finally, open architectural metal stairs were placed in several units.

Demanding market success

Lofts on Central began pre-marketing in December 2001, just after the terrorist attacks in September. "We didn't have a problem selling, but I was worried," Brown says. "When you commit the dollars to do it and all of the sudden everyone's wondering what the economy's going to be like. I was afraid.

"I was pioneering," Brown says. "Typically, in these buildings, you sell a bunch right away to people that get it and know it. It's slow in the middle but as soon as the building is completed, then it sells out."

Now completely sold out, Lofts on Central is a huge success. Prices ranged from \$242,000 to \$700,000 per unit based on the amount of finish out Artisan provided. To purchase a shell unit without finish out cost \$177,500, which is very affordable for the current Phoenix area market price. The average hard cost of construction, excluding land, came in at \$84 per square foot. A few units are currently on the market for second buyers. "They've gone up to about \$125 per square foot in the last year," Brown says.

All in all, Lofts on Central made a difference to the downtown area. "We proved there is a market," Brown says. "This has already been happening in Denver, Seattle and Chicago, but it could work in Des Moines. It could work in Oklahoma City.

"Pick a city. There are people looking for this kind of lifestyle," Brown says. "It's challenging, but boy it's rewarding."

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Andrea Vrankar

U. S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, Cleveland

SINGLE FAMILY

Farmhouse meets Tuscan



Robert Hidey Architects capture an awareness of centuries old, multigenerational homes by incorporating authentic materials and a variety of textures including natural stone; tumbled brick; clay tiles with mud boosts and distressed, stained wood lintels to distinguish this single-story Tuscan Farmhouse design.

This floor plan accomplishes a sense of living large and luxuriously comfortable along the Newport Coast with an outdoor living space to complement the interior portion of the home. "Texture, movement, variation in lot width were key design parameters," says principal Michael Evdokiou of the Irvine, Calif.-based company.



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home -2,401 to 3,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Cypress Location: Newport Coast, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Taylor Woodrow Homes, Irvine, Calif.

Interior Designer: Design Line Interiors, San Diego, Calif. Developer: The Irvine Company, Newport Beach, Calif. Land Planner: TRG Land, Newport Beach, Calif.

Interior Designer: Romanza, Naples, Fla.



SINGLE FAMILY

Comfort meets livability

A sense of comfort and livability infuse this two-story home with its cozy outdoor fire-places and casual living areas. The inside seems to spill into the open-air pool courtyard through a series of arches. And the rear loggia provides a covered outdoor dining and gathering space that frames views of the lake and golf course within the community.

Authentic materials such as terra cotta with inset painted tiles, stained tongue and groove ceilings, and rough hewn beamed ceilings transition into hallways of hand-scraped wood floors and arches. The ceiling heights vary, reinforcing the authenticity of period architectural styling.

Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home $-4,001\ \mathrm{sq}$. ft. and over

Project Name: Mirada at Estuary

Location: Naples, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Scheurer Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: London Bay Homes, Naples, Fla.



AFFORDABLE

Affordable urban housing



Affordable carriage homes and town-houses mix within this colorful and environmentally conscious, urban neighborhood in this new area of North Boulder. Integral to the design are green building and E-Star elements, which include passive solar heating for winter months and overhangs and steel awnings for summer months. All units feature energy, water, and resource conservation techniques.

Simple architectural forms are emphasized with primary colors, corrugated metal siding, concrete block and patterned stucco. The interior is light and open, which includes a loft with spiral staircase. Distinctive architectural forms help define the smaller spaces throughout.

Category: Best Affordable Home (both detached and attached)

Project Name: Garden Crossing

Location: Boulder, Colo.

Designer/Architect: DTJ Design, Boulder, Colo. Builder: Peak Properties, Boulder, Colo. Interior Designer: HW Home, Inc., Boulder, Colo. Developer: Peak Properties, Boulder, Colo. Land Planner: Barrett Studios, Boulder, Colo.





Contemporary southwest styling

A perfect blend of wood, stone, glass and metal create a contemporary southwest styling for this one-of-a-kind custom built home. The pentagon shaped beams made of treated sheet metal line and define the ceiling while walls of glass rim the back of the house, drawing your eye to the spacious backyard.

The exterior of this home offers many outdoor elements for entertaining at a grand scale with its open patios and seating areas, a full size lap pool and access to golfing. Use of natural materials and landscaping create a private feel surrounding the home site.

Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) - 4,001 to 6,500 sq. ft.

Project Name: A Private Residence

Location: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: Conk Architecture, Phoenix, Ariz. **Builder:** Manship Builders, Inc., Carefree, Ariz. **Interior Designer:** EST EST, Scottsdale, Ariz.



<u>Pl</u>atinum

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INTERIOR

Great kitchen functionality

Category: Best Kitchen in a Home - 5,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: The Browning Residence

Location: Knoxville, Tenn.

Designer/Architect: Bill Andrews Architects, Knoxville, Tenn. **Builder:** Schmid & Rhodes Construction, Knoxville, Tenn.

Interior Designer: Housebones, Knoxville, Tenn.

Land Planner: Benpage Associates Landscape Architects, Nashville,

Tenn.

Schmid & Rhodes Construction

designed this kitchen with four entries because "The kitchen is the heartbeat of the home," says David Rhodes, president of Schmid & Rhodes. The client likes to entertain casually and creating a kitchen that allowed multiple entries allowed for entertaining while preparing a meal.

Still, the kitchen maintains its functionality. Meanwhile, concealing amenities such as the icemaker, refrigerator and dishwasher create an open, casual area for entertaining. A butler's pantry defines a traditional transition between the kitchen and dining room. The client also requested natural light, which was achieved with multiple windows in the kitchen and a large double arch window in the butler's pantry.

Separate & common spaces

Platinum

In this master bathroom, separate his and her spaces unite with a common space in the walk-in shower. Inspired by an antique server, her vanity contains a marble slab counter with a mosaic backsplash. Across the hall sits a private walk-in closet and a built-in armoire.

His space complements hers, but with a masculine touch in the cabinetry and a mirror that conceals a built-in TV/DVD/CD screen. Herringbone pattern of limestone and mosaics on the walls and marble mosaics on the floor give the walk-in shower an elegant atmosphere. Dual showerheads and built-in seat provide maximum functionality.



Category: Best Master Bath
Project Name: 2005 Street of Dreams

Location: Wilsonville, Ore.

Designer/Architect: Alan Mascord Design Associates, Portland, Ore.

Builder: Wallace Custom Homes, Oregon City, Ore.

Interior Designer: Barclay Interior Design Group, Lake Oswego, Ore.

Developer: Beacon Homes, Tigard, Ore.

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INTERIOR

Multipurpose center

The Club at The Crossing delivers a comfortable residential environment. This detached, two-story, craftsman-style structure serves as a multipurpose recreation and service center for residents of Meridian Luxury Apartments.

Using only hard surface materials for the main entry and hallways produces a welcoming and comfortable feel. Rustic gold slate flooring with wood plank inset runs throughout the first floor entry and main hallways. Double volume wood paneled columns and beams line the entry into The Club.

The second floor, used for entertaining, provides ample seating around a cultured stacked stone fireplace in the common room, and the theatre room can be used for screenings and presentations.

Category: Best Amenity/Facility — 5,001 to 10,000 sq. ft. **Project Name:** Meridian Luxury Apartments at The Crossing

Location: San Bruno, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Sandy Babcock Architects Intl., San Francisco, Calif.

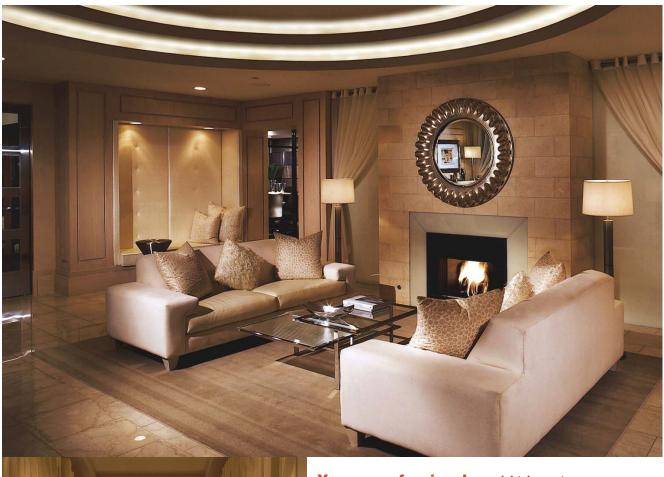
Builder: Devcon, Milpitas, Calif.

Interior Designer: Creative Design Consultants, LLC, Costa Mesa, Calif.

Developer: Regis Homes of Northern California & TMG Partners, San Mateo, Calif.

Land Planner: Guzzardo Partnership, San Francisco, Calif.

Luxurious amenity



Young professionals and high-earning individuals wanted the luxuries and excitement of a downtown location, which this community provided with a high-end recreational facility. "The intent for the lobby was to create an environment that felt like a sophisticated, hip hotel," says JoAnn McInnis, vice president of Carlyn and Company Interiors + Design.

The facility includes a pub and e-lounge roof top space with views of the Pentagon and downtown Washington D.C. A "zen inspired" massage room in the spa area offers a great oasis, and the adjoining exercise room is large enough to satisfy all the needs for a great workout.

Category: Best Amenity/Facility up to and including 5,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Metropolitan at Pentagon Row

Location: Arlington, Va.

Builder: KSI Services, Inc., Centreville, Va.

Interior Designer: Carlyn and Company Interiors + Design, Great Falls, Va.

INTERIOR

Desert materials create best amenity



Toll Brothers set out to build a community center to serve as a gathering place for weddings, anniversaries, meetings, classes and other activities at its master-planned community Aviano at Desert Ridge. Desert clone-stone dry stack, natural woods with stucco and steel plates give the center's architecture flare and a visually appealing exterior. At the same time, the contemporary design complements the desert surroundings.

The interior designers and architects integrated the seating areas, fireplaces, kitchen, patio and recreation areas around the sales displays so that sales and marketing activities can occur at the same time homeowners schedule meetings, parties, classes and special events.



Category: Best Amenity/Facility - 10,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: Aviano at Desert Ridge

Location: Phoenix, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: Douglas Fredrickson Architects, Phoenix, Ariz.

Builder: Toll Brothers, Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz. Interior Designer: Est Est, Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz. Developer: Toll Brothers, Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz. Land Planner: Toll Brothers, Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz.



COMMUNITY & SMART GROWTH

Neighboring smart growth

This old naval base evolved into a mixeduse, large-scale master planned community by carefully weaving the redeveloped portion with existing neighborhoods surrounding the old naval base. Creating a diverse architectural design for the community included six classic interpretations: Revival, Classical, Craftsman, Florida Vernacular, Coastal and Mediterranean.

Baldwin Park partnered with Audubon of Florida to help plan the parks and water edges, to create viable ecosystems where none existed. The developer also preserved and enhanced the existing mature tree canopy without being required under city regulations to do so.

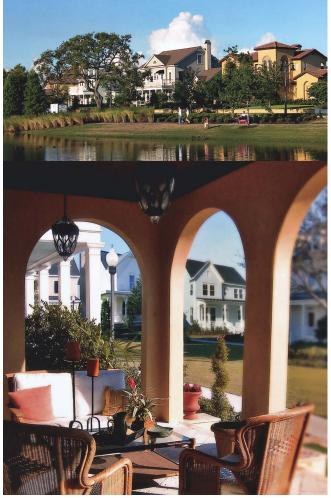
Category: Best Neighborhood 151 units and over & Best Smart Growth

Community 151 units and over **Project Name:** Baldwin Park **Location:** Orlando, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Looney Ricks Kiss, Celebration, Fla.

Builder: Multiple Companies

Developer: Baldwin Park Development Company, Orlando, Fla. **Land Planner:** Miller Sellen Connor & Walsh, Orlando, Fla.



COMMUNITY & SMART GROWTH

Restoring a neighborhood



Built around an existing neighborhood, University Park is an 8.5-acre redevelopment project located in historic downtown Palo Alto. SummerHill Homes built two condominium buildings and as well as single-family homes. They also restored five turn-of-the-century homes — all with the goal of maintaining the character of the existing neighborhood.

The builders and architects met several challenges with University Park, including achieving the city's housing density requirements, incorporating a community park, and obtaining neighborhood approval of the overall design relating to the existing historic neighborhood. The biggest challenge was physically moving several existing homes and restoring them in keeping with the redeveloped section of the project.





Category: Best Neighborhood up to and including 150 units

Project Name: University Park **Location:** Palo Alto, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Bracken Arrigoni & Ross, San Francisco, Calif.

Builder: SummerHill Homes, Palo Alto, Calif.

Interior Designer: Design Line Interiors, Palo Alto, Calif. Developer: SummerHill Homes, Palo Alto, Calif.

Land Planner: Brian Kangus Foulk, Redwood City, Calif.

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ATTACHED

Infill luxury condominiums

Enticing to move-down buyers,

Woodmark luxury condominiums at University Park were designed to fill the strong demand for a carefree and convenient home setting within walking distance of the partially redeveloped historic downtown Palo Alto.

The shingle-style Arts and Crafts building blends with the character of the historic downtown neighborhood. Sloping roofs, front porches, and divided light windows help define the style. The exterior finishes consist of wood shingles with rustic brick veneer wainscoting, which relates back to the fundamental design building block of the project — the Heritage Oak tree located on the corner of the property.

Category: Best Attached Home 20 units per acre and over & Best Attached Urban, Infill

Project Name: Woodmark at University Park

Location: Palo Alto, Calif.

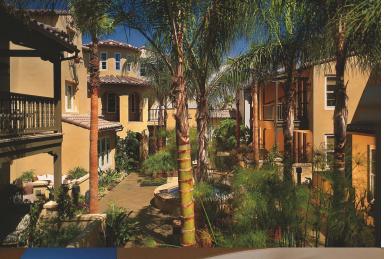
Designer/Architect: Bracken Arrigoni & Ross, San Francisco, Calif.

Builder: Vance Brown, Palo Alto, Calif.

Interior Designer: Design Line Interiors, San Diego, Calif. Developer: SummerHill Homes, Palo Alto, Calif. Land Planner: Brian Kangus Foulk, Redwood City, Calif.

ATTACHED

Mediterranean courtyard community



Sea Cove at The Waterfront creates ambience, diversity and function in high-density form by recalling the nostalgic charm of Pasadena's 1920s courtyard communities with a flare of Mediterranean architectural style. "It's been a predominant style used on the California coastline," says Ed Novak, senior designer at William Hezmalhalch Architects. "We blended that with the use of established palm trees within the courtyard."

Richly varied textures, materials and sculptural elements accentuate building forms and characterize Andalusian architectural roots. Expanded arches, coffers, light wells rotundas, recessed feature windows, and wrought-iron accents signify sophisticated charm of historic vernaculars.



Category: Best Attached Home 9 to 19 units per acre

Project Name: Sea Cove at The Waterfront **Location:** Huntington Beach, Calif.

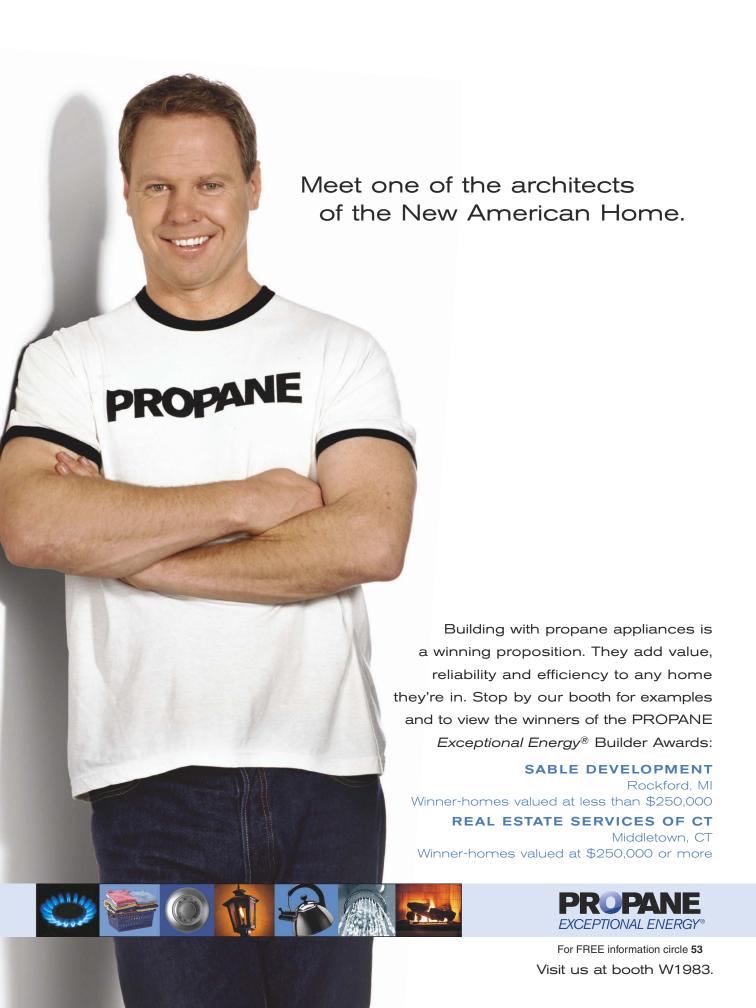
Designer/Architect: William Hezmalhalch Architects, Inc., Santa Ana, Calif.

Builder: William Lyon Homes, Newport Beach, Calif.

Interior Designer: Creative Design Consultants, Costa Mesa, Calif.

Developer: William Lyon Homes, Newport Beach, Calif.

Land Planner: William Hezmalhalch Architects, Inc., Santa Ana, Calif.





ATTACHED

Private attached living



A series of pocket parks surround each attached home at Silverleaf, creating a sense of privacy. The rear-loaded garages give creative opportunity to vary the massing of the front elevations, allowing the units to face the parks and capture the desert views and nearby mountains. In addition, each home contains a private courtyard, which helps natural light and breezes flow into the homes.

Dual master bedrooms combined with multiple options offer flexibility to meet the needs of each homeowner. Interior detailing includes rustic wood beams, wrought iron balconies, and use of terra cotta accents.

Category: Best Attached Home up to and including 8 units per acre

Project Name: Park Villas at Silverleaf

Location: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: Scheurer Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: CSE & Associates, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Interior Designer: Creative Design Consultants, Costa Mesa, Calif.

Developer: DMB, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Land Planner: Wood/Patel and Association, Phoenix, Ariz.



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North Atlantic (Region 1)

Craving textural interest Working with



Working within the constraints of the 75-foot-wide lot and 10-foot front and side setback requirements, Witt Construction created a home layered with textural interest and the space the client craved. The client's main objective was an indoor and outdoor environment for entertaining. Witt Construction achieved that with a front porch entry to the dining room leading into the living room and kitchen to follow by a screened-in porch.

The staircase leading to the second floor is open enough for easy passage to the upstairs bedrooms and encourages lingering at the library on the landing. This narrow lot not only provides the space the client wanted, but ensures privacy from neighbors.

Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) up to & including 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: 53 Waterview Drive **Location:** Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Designer/Architect: Witt Construction, Inc., Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Builder: Witt Construction, Inc., Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Interior Designer: Deborah Savage Interiors, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. **Developer:** Witt Construction, Inc., Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Middle Atlantic (Region 2) & Gold for Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) 4,001 -6,500 sq. ft.

Blending common materials

Regional

Built within a well-established neighborhood dating back to the Depression, this custom-built home was designed for a client with the need to entertain casually. Commonly used materials like stone and cedar shake siding help the home blend in.

The interior layout of the house is divided into three zones — an informal zone off of the garage, a formal zone in the middle, and a private master suite area on the right. The plan opens to a formal entry, which deemphasizes the stairs to the right. A large window wall in the living room overlooks the water on the property.



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom-Built Home — 4,001 to 6,500 sq. ft.

Project Name: The Browning Residence

Location: Knoxville, Tenn.

Designer/Architect: Bill Andrews Architects, Knoxville,

lenn.

Builder: Schmid & Rhodes Construction, Inc., Knoxville,

Tenn

Interior Designer: Housebones, Knoxville, Tenn. Land Planner: Benpage Associates Landscape

Architects, Nashville, Tenn.

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Regional

South Atlantic (Region 3) & Platinum for Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) 6,501 sq. ft. and over

Flipped ocean view



Set along the oceanfront, this shingle-styled custom home is a flipped plan, where the main living and entertaining occurs on the second floor. The client chose this layout to view the breakers on the ocean beyond the lagoon and on-site golf course.

The first level is dedicated to guests providing spa-like bedrooms and bathrooms and a secondary living room, which doubles as a theatre. The third floor is the couple's cozy apartment with vaulted bedroom ceiling and half circular window framing their personal ocean view, which leads out to a private balcony.

Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) - 6,501 sq. ft.

and over

Project Name: Home Is Where the View Is

Location: Kiawah Island, S.C.

Designer/Architect: Christopher Rose Architects, Johns Island, S.C.

Builder: Buffington Homes, L.P., Seabrook Island, S.C. **Interior Designer:** Cheryl Womack Interiors, Atlanta, Ga. **Developer:** Kiawah Development Partners, Charleston, S.C.

Land Planner: T Hunter McEaddy Landscape Architect, Charleston, S.C.

MIDWEST (REGION 4)

Carefree condo lifestyle



Inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, this Eastlake home is designed with structural simplicity and efficient use of space. The low-profile elevation is constructed with maintenance-free materials such as stone, shake and angular pillars, which is consistent with the overall appeal of the carefree Condominium lifestyle.

The interior scale of the main gathering room is enhanced with 10-foot ceilings, carefully placed windows and grand cornice moldings. The Craftsman-style fireplace combines function and panache with built-in entertainment alcoves.

Norfolk Homes created an attractive streetscape design by recessing the garages into the buildings. Driving down the road, the eye goes to the porches and other design features, not the garages.

Regional

Category: Best Attached Home up to and including 8 units per acre

Project Name: Eaton Court **Location:** Dexter, Mich.

Designer/Architect: J. Bradley Moore & Associates, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Builder: Norfolk Homes, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Interior Designer: Norfolk Homes, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Developer: Norfolk Development Corporation, Ann Arbor, Mich. **Land Planner**: Washington Engineering, Ann Arbor, Mich.

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Regional

CENTRAL (REGION 5) & SILVER FOR BEST ATTACHED HOME 20 UNITS PER ACRE AND OVER

Creating housing lofts



Fronting on the newly refurbished Midtown Greenway bike trail in Minneapolis, these lofts provided new housing and gave a new look to this former industrial site. The units have north and south exposure, with south-facing two-story windows, rooftop decks and main floor enclosed patios.

Each buyer chooses the style — traditional or contemporary — best suited for his needs. Hardwood and carpet flooring with finished ceilings and crown molding characterize the traditional look. Sealed concrete flooring, exposed ductwork and less separation between rooms characterize the contemporary look, which 70 percent of the buyers prefer.

Category: Best Attached Home 20 units per acre and over

Project Name: Midtown Lofts **Location:** Minneapolis, Minn.

Designer/Architect: ESG Architects, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn.

Builder: Kraus-Anderson, Minneapolis, Minn. Interior Designer: Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn. Developer: Lander Sherman, Minneapolis, Minn. Land Planner: Michael Lander, Minneapolis, Minn.

Regional

SOUTH CENTRAL (REGION 6)

Bigger isn't better

Unlike the standard Texas motto "bigger is better," the focus for this custom home in Houston was standing the test of time and weathering beautifully. Thompson Custom Homes achieved an understated, family-friendly home by creating an exterior elevation of classic proportion and scale and timeless design.

The construction materials were chosen for their long-lasting performance and ability to age well. Over the years, the beauty of the slate tile roof, operable wooden shutters, real stone, brick, stucco and copper gutters will increase. Brick, stone, and wood carry through to the interior as well.



 $\hbox{\bf Category:} \ \hbox{\bf Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client)} \ -\ 6,501 \ \hbox{sq. ft. and over}$

Project Name: 9 Chuckanut Location: Houston, Texas

Designer/Architect: Robert Dame Designs, Houston, Texas Builder: Thompson Custom Homes, Houston, Texas Interior Designer: Bellacasa Design, The Woodlands, Texas

Empty nesters' nests aren't always empty.

Eight out of 10 fire deaths occur in homes and the elderly and very young are most often the victims. Home fires often happen at night when people are sleeping. A room can become engulfed in smoke and flames before anyone awakens.

A fire sprinkler system is the best protection against fire. But sprinklers can't save lives if they are not there.

HFSC has developed the BUILT FOR LIFE[™] education program to give you the information you need to better understand how residential fire sprinkler systems are designed and installed. It also shows how trade-ups can reduce construction costs while providing higher-value homes to your customers.

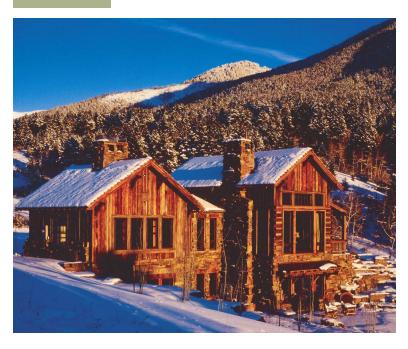
For a free copy of the BUILT FOR LIFE information kit, including a DVD narrated by Ron Hazelton and free builder and consumer brochures, visit **www.homefiresprinkler.org** or call **1.888.635.7222** today.



Regional

MOUNTAIN (REGION 7) & PLATINUM FOR BEST ONE-OF-A-KIND SPEC-BUILT HOME UP TO AND INCLUDING 4,000 SQ. FT.

Century old meets new



Incorporating a century old squarelog building as the design crux, this spec ranch meets modern times with its upgrade to a home theater system and automated lighting among other modern amenities. Still, the space retains the unique character of hand-crafted timber homes of old.

Most of the exterior siding came from existing buildings on the property. Locati Architects spent a great deal of time evaluating the site and where to properly place existing structures to blend with the new.

Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Spec-Built Home up to

and including 4,000 sq. ft. **Project Name:** Running Elk Ranch **Location:** Bozeman, Mont.

Designer/Architect: Locati Architects, Bozeman, Mont. Builder: Schlauch Bottcher Construction, Bozeman, Mont.

Mont.

Interior Designer: Locati Architects , Bozeman, Mont. Land Planner: Locati Architects, Bozeman, Mont.

Regional

Pacific (Region 8) & Platinum for Best Single-Family Detached Home 3,001 to 4,000 sq. ft.

Pacific outdoor space

This home focuses on outdoor living space in Spanish colonial style by presenting a discrete loggia tucked inside a deep barrel arch and centered on rounded French doors at the front of the home. The lots are oriented to the front parks of the community, so the house was designed to "live to the front." "The design concept was influenced by a prominent Arizona architect named Josias Joesler, who in the late 1920s clearly understood the importance of taking advantage of the views while preserving as much of the natural vegetation and topography as possible," says Davey Ambat, principal architect with Robert Hidey Architects.

Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home—3,001 to 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Verandahs at Silverleaf

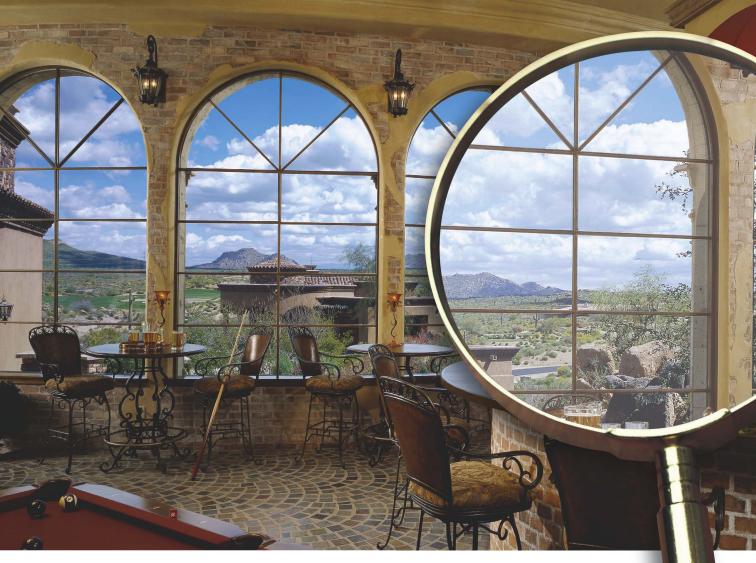
Location: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Camelot Homes, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Interior Designer: Design Tech, Newport Beach, Calif. Developer: DMB Associates, Scottsdale, Ariz. Land Planner: Swaback Partners, Scottsdale, Ariz.





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SINGLE FAMILY

Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 1,801 to 2,400 sq. ft.

Project Name: Soleil Location: San Diego, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif. Interior Designer: Color Design Art, Culver City, Calif. Developer: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif. Land Planner: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif.



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 2,401 to 3,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Vicara Location: Irvine, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif. Builder: Richmond American Homes, Irvine, Calif. Interior Designer: Pacific Dimensions, El Segundo, Calif. Developer: The Irvine Company, Newport Beach, Calif. Land Planner: The Irvine Company, Newport Beach, Calif.



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 3,001 to 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: The Cove at Bayport

Location: Alameda, Calif.

Designer/Architect: William Hezmalhalch Architects, Inc., Santa Ana,

Calif.

Builder: Warmington Homes, San Ramon, Calif. Interior Designer: Taylor Roberts, Philo, Calif. Developer: Warmington Homes, San Ramon, Calif.

Land Planner: RNM Architects and Planning, Newport Beach, Calif.



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 3,001 to 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Cypress at Pacific Ridge

Location: Newport Coast, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Taylor Woodrow Homes, Irvine, Calif.

Interior Designer: Design Line Interiors, San Diego, Calif. Developer: The Irvine Company, Newport Beach, Calif. Land Planner: TRG Land Inc., Newport Beach, Calif.

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SINGLE FAMILY

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Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 4,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: La Cima Location: Irvine, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Laing Luxury, Newport Beach, Calif.

Interior Designer: Meridian Interiors, Costa Mesa, Calif.

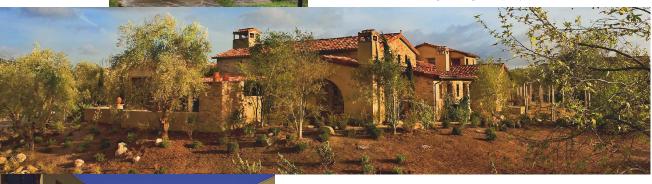
Developer: ICDC, Newport Beach, Calif.

Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 4,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: The Baywood Collection at Santaluz

Location: San Diego, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Scheurer Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.
Builder: Baywood Development, Newport Beach, Calif.
Interior Designer: Color Design Art, Culver City, Calif.
Land Planner: Rick Engineering Company, Riverside, Calif.



ATTACHED



Category: Best Attached Home 20 units per acre and over

Project Name: 3rd Avenue Lofts **Location:** Scottsdale, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Inc., Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Trillium, Phoenix, Ariz. **Developer**: Trillium, Phoenix, Ariz.

Land Planner: McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Inc., Irvine, Calif.

Category: Best Attached Urban, Infill

Project Name: 255 Berry Street - Channel Park

Location: San Francisco, Calif.

Designer/Architect: McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Inc., Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Devcon Construction, Milpitas, Calif.

Interior Designer: Laurie Ghielmetti Interiors, Pleasanton, Calif.

Developer: Signature Properties, Pleasanton, Calif.

Land Planner: McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Inc., Irvine, Calif.



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ONE-OF-A-KIND

Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) up to & including 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Black Hammock

Location: Oviedo, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects and Planners, Inc., Oviedo, Fla.

Builder: Chess Incorporated, Oveido, Fla.

Interior Designer: Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects and Planners, Inc., Oviedo, Fla. Land Planner: Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects and Planners, Inc., Oviedo, Fla.

Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) up to & including 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Craftsmen Style Meets Southwest

Location: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: JP Malone Construction Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz.

Builder: JP Malone Construction Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz. Interior Designer: Jan Anderson, Carefree, Ariz. Land Planner: Pinnacle Engineering, Scottsdale, Ariz.



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Spec-Built Home 4,001 sq. ft.

to 6,500 sq. ft.

Project Name: Ranch House Location: Irvine, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Monarch Estates, Irvine, Calif.

Interior Designer: Ebanista, Laguna Niguel, Calif. Developer: Monarch Estates, Irvine, Calif.

Land Planner: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) 6,501 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: Jones Residence

Location: Whitefish, Mont.

Designer/Architect: TKP Architects, Golden, Colo. Builder: Denman Construction, Whitefish, Mont. Interior Designer: McNamara Design, Denver, Colo. Land Planner: TKP Architects, Golden, Colo.





RENTAL

>>

Category: Best Rental Development 5 units and over

Project Name: The Ashton Location: Dallas, Texas

Designer/Architect: Gromatzky Dupree & Associates, Dallas,

Texas

Builder: The Hanover Company, Houston, Texas **Interior Designer:** Kathy Andrews Interiors, Houston, Texas **Developer:** The Hanover Company, Houston, Texas

Category: Best Rental Development 5 units and over

Project Name: Lofts on Post Oak Location: Houston, Texas

Designer/Architect: Wallace/Garcia + Associates, Houston,

Texas

Builder: The Hanover Company, Houston, Texas **Interior Designer:** Kathy Andrews Interiors, Houston, Texas

 $\label{eq:Developer:The Hanover Company, Houston, Texas} \end{\mathbf{Developer:}}$







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Gold







SMART GROWTH

↑ Category: Best Urban Smart Growth Neighborhood/Community

Project Name: West River Commons

Location: Minneapolis, Minn.

Designer/Architect: DJR Architects, Minneapolis, Minn.
Builder: Shaw-Lundquist Associates, Inc., St. Paul, Minn.
Interior Designer: Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn.
Developer: Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn.
Land Planner: Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn.

<<

Category: Best Urban Smart Growth Neighborhood/Community

Project Name: Chatham Square

Location: Alexandria, Va.

Designer/Architect: Lessard Group, Vienna, Va.
Builder: Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Arlington, Va.
Interior Designer: Model Home Interiors, Beltsville, Md.
Developer: Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Arlington, Va.

Land Planner: Lessard Group, Vienna, Va.



Category: Best Suburban Smart Growth

Neighborhood/Community

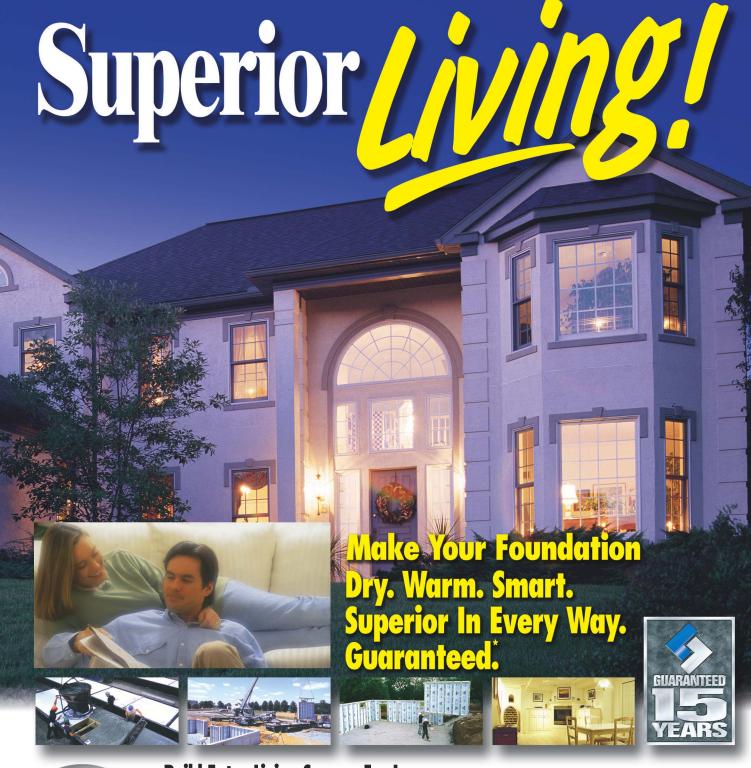
Project Name: Belvoir Family Housing

Location: Fort Belvoir, Va.

Designer/Architect: Torti Gallas and Partners, Silver Spring, Md.

Builder: Clark Realty Builders, LLC, Fort Belvoir, Va.

Interior Designer: Torti Gallas and Partners, Silver Spring, Md. Developer: Clark Realty Builders, LLC, Fort Belvoir, Va. Land Planner: Torti Gallas and Partners, Silver Spring, Md.





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INTERIOR

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Category: Best Kitchen in a Home up to 3,00 sq. ft.

Project Name: Reunion Resort & Club

Location: Orlando, Fla.

Designer/Architect: The Evans Group, Orlando, Fla.

Builder: Bel-Aire Homes, Winter Park, Fla.

Interior Designer: Kay Green Design, Inc, Orlando, Fla. Developer: Dye Development, Winter Park, Fla.

Category: Best Kitchen in a Home 3,001 to 5,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: 2005 Street of Dreams

Location: Wilsonville, Ore.

Designer/Architect: Alan Mascord Design Associates,

Portland, Ore.

Builder: Wallace Custom Homes, Oregon City, Ore. **Interior Designer:** Barclay Interior Design Group, Lake

Oswego, Ore.

Developer: Beacon Homes, Tigard, Ore.



Category: Best Specialty Room in a Home 3,001 to 5,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: The Legacy, Plat 2 **Location:** Temperance, Mich.

Designer/Architect: Mahr Design, Ltd., Chicago, III. **Builder:** Dick Brighton Builder, Inc., Temperance, Mich.

Interior Designer: c'est la vie!, Toledo, Ohio

Developer: Premiere Property Group, Perrysburg, Ohio **Land Planner:** Premiere Property Group, Perrysburg, Ohio

>>

Category: Best Kitchen in a Home 5,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: The Mugello Location: Naples, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Eric Brown Design Group, Bonita Springs, Fla.

Builder: Harwick Homes Construction Inc., Naples, Fla. Interior Designer: Collins & Dupont, Bonita Springs, Fla. Developer: Bonita Bay Group, Bonita Springs, Fla. Land Planner: Bonita Bay Group, Bonita Springs, Fla.



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Plans and Projects

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INTERIOR



Category: Best Detail in a Semi-Custom/Custom Home

Project Name: Catta Verdera Location: Lincoln, Calif.

Designer/Architect: The Design Collaborative, Eldorado, Calif.

Builder: Travos Homes, Inc., Rocklin, Calif.

Interior Designer: Taylor Roberts Model Home Furnishings,

Philo, Calif.



Category: Best Detail in a Semi-Custom/Custom Home

Project Name: The Bellagio at Longview

Location: Weddington, N.C.

Designer/Architect: Christopher Phelps & Associates,

Charlotte, N.C.

Builder: Unique Homes of Charlotte, N.C.

Interior Designer: Robbie Warren Interiors, Charlotte, N.C. Developer: Longview Investors, LLC, Weddington, N.C. Land Planner: Longview Investors, LLC, Weddington, N.C.



Category: Best Amenity/Facility 5,001 to 10,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: MiraBay Location: Apollo Beach, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Basham & Lucas Design Group, Inc.,

Jacksonville, Fla.

Builder: Newland Southeast, Apollo Beach, Fla. Interior Designer: Kay Green Design, Inc., Orlando, Fla. Developer: Newland Southeast, Apollo Beach, Fla. Land Planner: Basham & Lucas Design Group, Inc.,

Jacksonville, Fla.



Category: Best Amenity/Facility 10,001 sq. ft. and over Project Name: The McCaffrey Group Corporate Office

Location: Fresno, Calif.

Designer/Architect: T-Squared Architects, Fresno, Calif.

Builder: The McCaffrey Group, Fresno, Calif.

Interior Designer: Creative Design Consultants, LLC, Costa

Mesa. Calif.

Developer: The McCaffrey Group, Fresno, Calif. Land Planner: Valley Planning, Van Nuys, Calif.





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Plans and Projects

Silver

SINGLE FAMILY



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, under 1,500 sq. ft.

Project Name: Woodlands of Athens

Location: Athens, Ga.

Designer/Architect: Armentrout, Roebuck & Matheny, Athens, Ga.

Builder: Dovetail Builders, Inc., Athens, Ga. Interior Designer: Design & Interiors, Athens, Ga. Developer: Dovetail Development, LLC, Athens, Ga. Land Planner: Williams & Associates, Athens, Ga.

Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 1,501 to 1,800 sq. ft.

Project Name: Oak Commons

Location: Gilroy, Calif.

Designer/Architect: KTGY Group, Inc., Irvine, Calif. Builder: O'Brien Group, San Mateo, Calif. Interior Designer: Taylor Roberts, Philo, Calif. Developer: O'Brien Group, San Mateo, Calif. Land Planner: O'Brien Group, San Mateo, Calif.





Project Name: Oakmont Location: Beaumont, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif. Interior Designer: Color Design Art, Culver City, Calif. Developer: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif. Land Planner: Larson & Associates, Agoura Hills, Calif.



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Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 2,401 to 3,000 sq. ft.

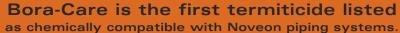
Project Name: Portico Location: San Diego, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif. Interior Designer: Color Design Art, Culver City, Calif. Developer: Pardee Homes, Los Angeles, Calif. Land Planner: Latitude 33, San Diego, Calif.









Silver



SINGLE FAMILY



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 2,401 to 3,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: The Cove at Bayport

Location: Alameda, Calif.

Designer/Architect: William Hezmalhalch Architects, Inc., Santa Ana, Calif.

Builder: Warmington Homes, San Ramon, Calif. **Interior Designer:** Taylor Roberts, Philo, Calif. **Developer:** Warmington Homes, San Ramon, Calif.

Land Planner: RNM Architects and Planning, Newport Beach, Calif.



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 3,001 to 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Mira Bay Location: Apollo Beach, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Bloodgood Sharp Architects and Planners, Inc.,

Tampa, Fla.

Builder: Hannah Bartoletta Homes

Interior Designer: All Interior Furnishings, Tampa, Fla. Developer: Newland Communities, San Diego, Calif. Land Planner: Green Windmill Gardens, Dover, Fla.



Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 4,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: La Cima Location: Irvine, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Robert Hidey Architects, Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Laing Luxury, Newport Beach, Calif.

Interior Designer: Meridian Interiors, Costa Mesa, Calif.

Developer: ICDC, Newport Beach, Calif.

Category: Best Single-Family Detached Home, 4,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: The Baywood Collection at Santaluz

Location: San Diego, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Scheurer Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: Baywood Development, Newport Beach, Calif.

Interior Designer: Color Design Art, Culver City, Calif.

Land Planner: Rick Engineering Company, Riverside, Calif.





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Plans and Projects

Silver



ONE-OF-A-KIND

A Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) 4,001 to 6,500 sq. ft.

Project Name: The Defelice Residence

Location: Irvine, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: Warmington Custom Homes, Costa Mesa, Calif. Interior Designer: Pollock & Associates, Costa Mesa, Calif.



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) 6,501 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: Catta Verdera Location: Lincoln, Calif.

Designer/Architect: The Design Collaborative, Eldorado, Calif.

Builder: Travos Homes, Inc., Rocklin, Calif.

Interior Designer: Taylor Roberts Model Home Furnishings, Philo, Calif.





Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Custom Home (Built for a Client) 6,501 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: Private Residence

Location: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Designer/Architect: Urban Design Associates, Ltd., Scottsdale, Ariz.

Builder: Peterson Varley, Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz.

Interior Designer: Billi Springer and Associates, Scottsdale, Ariz.



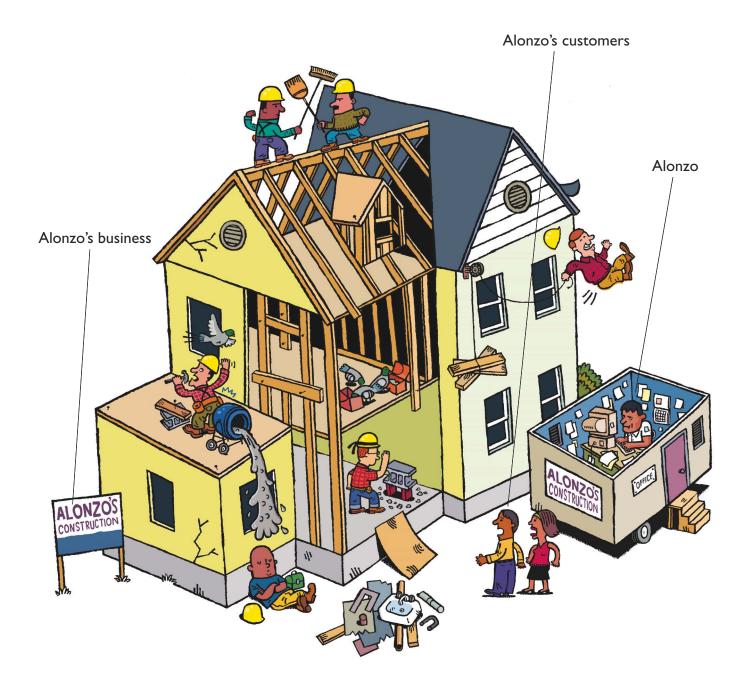
Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Spec-Built Home up to 4,000 sq. ft.

Project Name: Bay Street Spec House

Location: Fenwick Island, Del.

Designer/Architect: Becker Morgan Group, Inc., Salisbury, Md.

Builder: Joseph T. Dashiell, Inc., Ocean City, Md. **Developer:** Joseph T. Dashiell, Inc., Ocean City, Md.



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ONE-OF-A-KIND



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Spec-Built Home 4,001 to 6,500

sq. ft.

Project Name: Twin Pines Location: Whitefish, Mont.

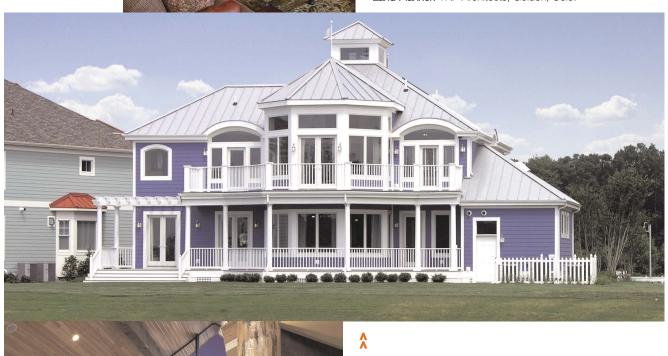
Designer/Architect: TKP Architects, Golden, Colo.

Builder: Denman Construction, Whitefish, Mont.

Interior Designer: Carol Nelson Design, Kalispell, Mont.

Developer: Douglas Gamble Development, Whitefish, Mont.

Land Planner: TKP Architects, Golden, Colo.



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Spec-Built Home 4,001 to 6,500 sq. ft.

Project Name: The Peninsula on the Indian River Bay

Location: Millsboro, Del.

Designer/Architect: Becker Morgan Group, Inc., Salisbury, Md. Builder: Echelon Custom Homes, Rehoboth Beach, Del. Interior Designer: Echelon Custom Homes, Rehdooth Beach, Del.

Developer: Odyssey Development, Inc., McLean, Va. **Land Planner:** McCrone, Inc., Salisbury, Md.

rio i la li loi. Moorono, ino., cano



Category: Best One-of-a-Kind Spec-Built Home 6,501 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: Woodland Shores **Location:** Lee's Summit, Mo.

Designer/Architect: R.S. Bickford & Co., Overland Park, Kan.

Builder: Riffe Homes, Inc., Lake Winnebago, Mo. Interior Designer: Hobson's Interiors, Kansas City, Mo. Developer: G & R Development, Lake Winnebago, Mo. Land Planner: Archer Engineering, Lee's Summit, Mo.

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RENTAL

<<

Category: Best Rental Development 5 units and over

Project Name: Botanica on Green

Location: Denver, Colo.

Designer/Architect: Thomas P. Cox: Architects, Inc., Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Forest City Stapleton, Denver, Colo.
Interior Designer: Lifestyle Interiors, Northridge, Calif.
Developer: Forest City Stapleton, Denver, Colo.
Land Planner: Calthorpe and Associates, Berkeley, Calif.



Category: Best Rental Development 5 units and over

Project Name: Meridian Luxury Apartments at The Crossing

Location: San Bruno, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Sandy Babcock Architects Intl., San Francisco, Calif.

Builder: Devcon, Milpitas, Calif.

Interior Designer: Creative Design Consultants, LLC, Costa Mesa, Calif. Developer: Regis Homes of Northern California & TMG Partners, San

Mateo, Calif.

Land Planner: Guzzardo Partnership, San Francisco, Calif.



Category: Best Rental Development 5 units and over

Project Name: Gables Augusta Location: Houston, Texas

Designer/Architect: Donald J. Meeks, AIA, Houston, Texas

Builder: Ben Pisklak, Houston, Texas

Interior Designer: Nicholas Carnegis, Houston, Texas

Developer: Ben Pisklak, Houston, Texas

Land Planner: Donald J. Meeks, AIA, Houston, Texas

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COMMUNITY

Category: Best Neighborhood 151 units and over

Project Name: Chatham Square Location: Alexandria, Va.

Designer/Architect: Lessard Group, Vienna, Va. Builder: Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Arlington, Va. Interior Designer: Model Home Interiors, Beltsville, Md. Developer: Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Arlington, Va.

Land Planner: Lessard Group, Vienna, Va.

SMART GROWTH

<<

Category: Best Smart Growth Community up to and

including 150 units

Project Name: Waterstreet Brownstones & Vinestreet Lofts

Location: Des Moines, Iowa

Designer/Architect: Swenson Graham Architects,

Minneapolis, Minn.

Builder: The Hansen Company, Johnson, Iowa Interior Designer: Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn. Developer: Lander Sherman, Minneapolis, Minn. Land Planner: Lander Group, Minneapolis, Minn.

<<

Category: Best Smart Growth Community 151 units and

over

Project Name: Issaquah Highlands

Location: Issaquah, Wash.

Developer: Port Blakely Communities, Inc., Issaquah,

Wash

Land Planner: Calthorpe Associates, Berkeley, Calif.



Category: Best Urban Smart Growth

Neighborhood/Community **Project Name:** Othello Station **Location:** Seattle, Wash.

Designer/Architect: WRT Solomon ETC, San Francisco,

Calif

Builder: Walsh Construction Company, Seattle, Wash. Developer: Seattle Housing Authority, Seattle, Wash. Land Planner: WRT Solomon ETC, San Francisco, Calif.



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HUD

Category: HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence Project Name: Sandtown Winchester Square II/III

Location: Baltimore, Md.

Designer/Architect: Donald B. Ratcliffe & Associates, Stevenson, Md.

Builder: Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse, Inc., Baltimore, Md.

Developer: B.U.I.L.D./Enterprise Nehemiah Development, Inc., Baltimore, Md.

Land Planner: Urban Design Associates, Pittsburgh, Pa.



Category: HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence Project Name: Madison Healthy Homes

Location: Denver, Colo.

Designer/Architect: Chris Stumpo, Northeast Denver Housing Center, Denver, Colo.

Builder: GM Construction, Denver, Colo.

Developer: Northeast Denver Housing Center, Denver, Colo.





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ATTACHED



Category: Best Attached Home up to and including 8 units per acre

Project Name: Castellina Location: Ladera Ranch, Calif.

Designer/Architect: Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.

Builder: Centex Homes, South Coast Division, Irvine, Calif.
Interior Designer: Design Tec Interiors, Newport Beach, Calif.
Developer: DMB Ladera, LLC, San Juan Capistrano, Calif.
Land Planner: Bassenian/Lagoni Architects, Newport Beach, Calif.



Category: Best Attached Urban, Infill Project Name: Chatham Square

Location: Alexandria, Va.

Designer/Architect: Lessard Group, Vienna, Va.
Builder: Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Arlington, Va.
Interior Designer: Model Home Interiors, Beltsville, Md.
Developer: Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Arlington, Va.

Land Planner: Lessard Group, Vienna, Va.

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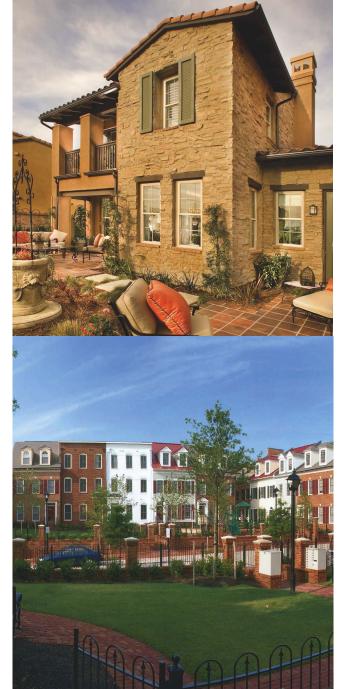
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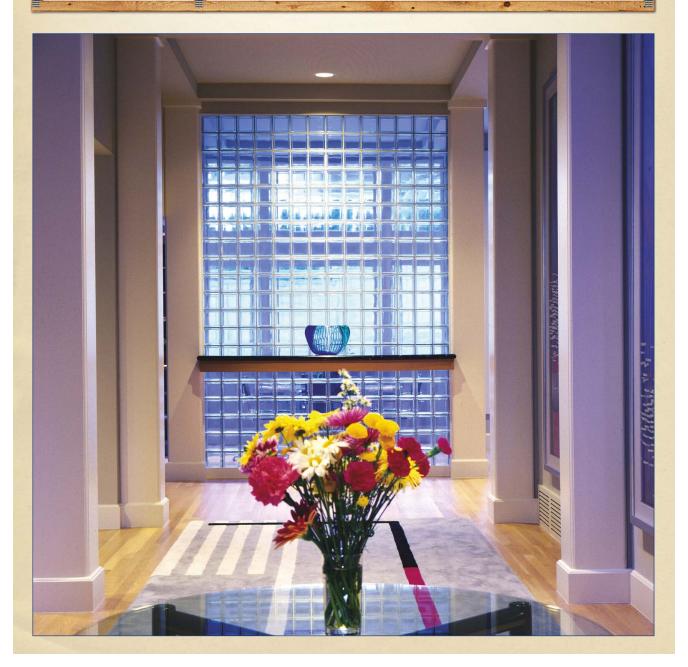




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AFFORDABLE

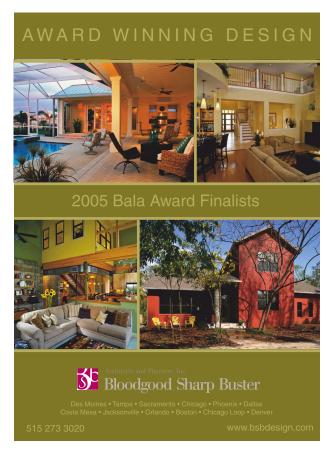
Category: Best Affordable Home (both detached and attached)

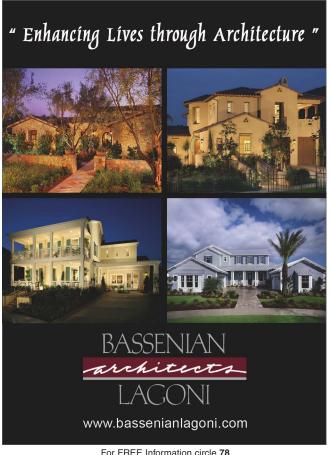
Project Name: Walnut Grove Location: Walnut, Calif.

Designer/Architect: McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Inc., Irvine, Calif.

Builder: Salter Company, Inc., Los Angeles, Calif. Developer: Investment Properties, Los Angeles, Calif.

Land Planner: McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Inc., Irvine, Calif.







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INTERIOR

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Category: Best Kitchen in a Home 5,001 sq. ft. and over

Project Name: Grandview at The Palisades

Location: Charlotte, N.C.

Designer/Architect: Residential Architect, David Misenheimer, Charlotte, N.C.

Builder: Provident Homes, Inc., Charlotte, N.C.

Interior Designer: Amy Nash Griffin Professional Interior Design, Charlotte, N.C.

Developer: Rhein Interests, LLC, Charlotte, N.C.

Land Planner: WRG, Scottsdale, Ariz.



Category: Best Master Bath

Project Name: The Bellagio at Longview

Location: Weddington, N.C.

Designer/Architect: Christopher Phelps & Associates, Charlotte, N.C.

Builder: Unique Homes of Charlotte, Inc., Charlotte, N.C. Interior Designer: Robbie Warren Interiors, Charlotte, N.C. Developer: Longview Investors, LLC, Weddington, N.C. Land Planner: Longview Investors, LLC, Weddington, N.C.



Category: Best Master Bath Project Name: 9 Chuckanut Location: Houston, Texas

Designer/Architect: Robert Dame Designs, Houston, Texas Builder: Thompson Custom Homes, Houston, Texas Interior Designer: Bellacasa Design, The Woodlands, Texas

<<

Category: Best Master Bath

Project Name: 2005 Street of Dreams

Location: Wilsonville, Ore.

Designer/Architect: Alan Mascord Design Associates,

Portland, Ore.

Builder: Wallace Custom Homes, Oregon City, Ore. **Interior Designer:** Barclay Interior Design Group, Lake

Oswego, Ore.

Developer: Beacon Homes, Tigard, Ore.

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Plans and Projects

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INTERIOR

<<

Category: Best Detail in a Production Home

Project Name: Grand Hampton

Location: Tampa, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Davis Bews Design Group, Inc., Oldsmar, Fla.

Builder: Taylor Woodrow, Riverview, Fla.

Interior Designer: Kay Green Design, Inc., Orlando, Fla.

Developer: Taylor Woodrow, Riverview, Fla.



Category: Best Detail in a Semi-Custom/Custom Home

Project Name: Home Theater Ceiling Detail

Location: Wadsworth, III.

Designer/Architect: Group A Architects/Builders, Arlington Heights, III.

Builder: Group A Architects/Builders, Arlington Heights, III.

Interior Designer: Studio H, Chicago, III.





Category: Best Amenity Facility
Project Name: Block Lofts Apartments

Location: Atlanta, Ga.

Designer/Architect: The Preston Partnership, LLC, Atlanta, Ga.

Builder: Worthing Southeast Builders, Atlanta, Ga. Interior Designer: The Preston Partnership, LLC, Atlanta, Ga. Developer: Southeast Capital Partners, Inc., Atlanta, Ga. Land Planner: Highland Engineering, Atlanta, Ga.

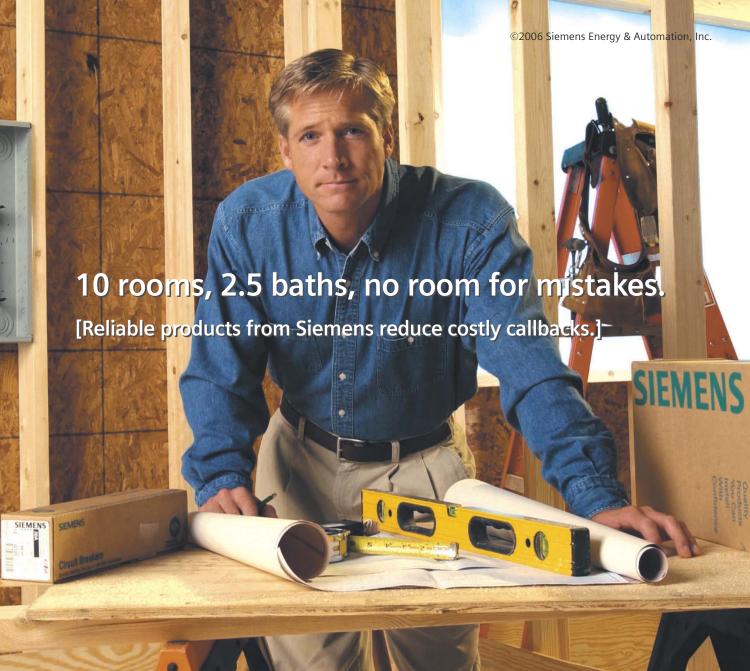
Category: Best Amenity/Facility up to and including 5,000 sq. ft. Project Name: Lakewood Ranch Information Center

Location: Sarasota, Fla.

Designer/Architect: Lawson Group Inc. Architects, Sarasota, Fla. Builder: Dunn & Denham Construction, Inc., Sarasota, Fla. Interior Designer: Renaissance Creative Services, Jacksonville, Fla.

Developer: LWR Communities, LLC, Bradenton, Fla.





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Bruce Waletich loved his hillside property and its expansive view from high above the Minnesota River Valley in Southern Minnesota. But, all that beauty came at a price; he needed to protect his family's home from the natural forces of soil creep and erosion that threaten all hillside structures in the area. A Keystone wall provided the answer to Waletich's problem, but only after some trial, and unfortunately, error.

In 1992, Waletich's first venture into terracing and stabilizing his hill was with a timber structure that failed due to a large rainfall soon after installation was complete. Waletich then discovered Keystone. "I was drawn to the rich-looking appearance of the Keystone blocks," said Waletich. "I also loved the fact that curved Keystone walls are both beautiful and stronger than straight walls."



structure is constructed from Keystone Compac straight-faced treads, capped by Keystone Universal capping units. For a nice finishing touch, with the safety of his grandchildren in mind, Waletich added white fences to the top of the pedestrian-accessible walls. The fences are attached to the Keystone Universal capping units with masonry anchor screws and construction adhesive.



One more special design touch would make Waletich's wall complete - a putting green. In what seemed like a perfect use for the space, Waletich used class five road base material to create a sloping putting surface on the lower tier of the wall. As a final touch, he added artificial turf and two sand bunkers. Users can test their skill chipping down from the upper terrace, punching out of a bunker, or rolling in a 20-foot-putt.

The project allowed Waletich to fulfill a promise to his grandson that, "Grandpa is going to build you a golf course." And, while Keystone does not recommend that homeowners tackle projects of this size and scope, Waletich's wall is a great example of how easy and effective Keystone products can be to use if installed according to strict site and product specifications.

For more information on this project, on Keystone Compac, or any other innovative Keystone products, visit **www.keystonewalls.com** or call (952) 897-1040.

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As a large scale do-it-yourselfer, Waletich was able to rely on the technical assistance of Raoul Johnson of Keystone licensed manufacturer, Superior Concrete Block Company. "Raoul was great," said Waletich. "He definitely knows the product, grid and installation in and out. His help was invaluable." According to Waletich, he was also well served by the City of North Mankato officials who supported him through the approvals and installation process, eliminating any conflict with the city-owned path that runs adjacent to the wall.

The multi-tiered wall system consists of approximately 1500 sq. ft. of Keystone Compac tri-plane units. According to Waletich, the wall follows the natural contours of the hillside, creating a visually appealing structure that is strong enough to support the home and terracing above. The sweeping staircase that connects the levels of the wall

Project: Location: Keystone Supplier: Keystone Products Used: Wall Area: Owner: Waletich Home North Mankato, Minnesota Superior Concrete Block Company Keystone Compac 1,500 sq. ft. Bruce Waletich

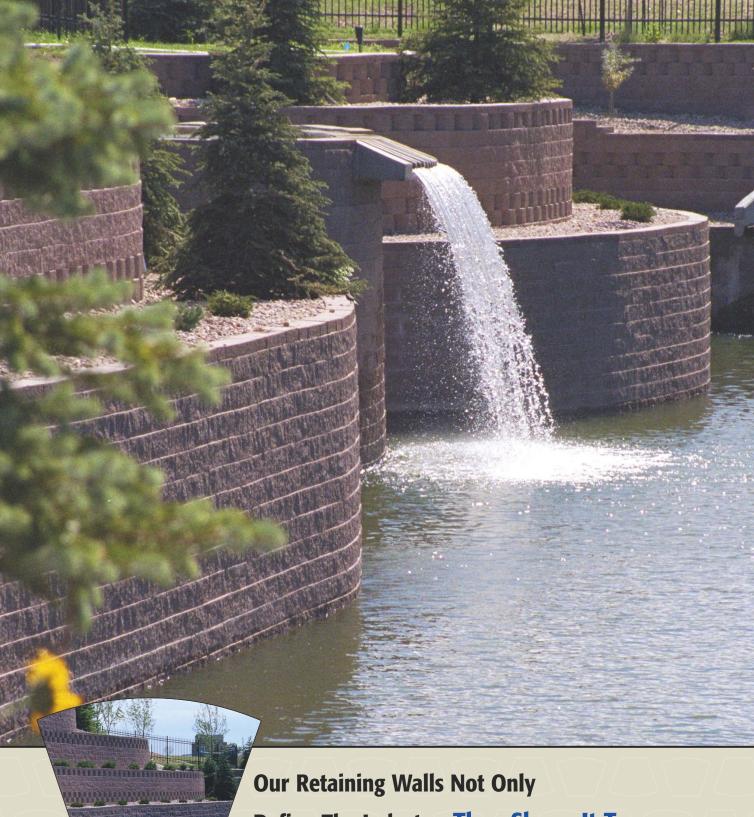
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Today's Kitchens Have it All

Design trends and products for kitchens in 2006 offer new home buyers high-tech appliances and tough, low-maintenance finishes as well as create a space that is always open for entertaining

No matter the size of the home, the kitchen is indisputably the hardest working room in the place. Gone are the days when having plenty of counter and cabinet space was the primary concern for potential home buyers. Top design experts and builders from across the country agree that these days, people expect, and are getting, more performance from their kitchens than ever before.

"Rather than simply functioning as a work area for meal preparation, the kitchen has become much more important as an entertaining space," says Sean Ruck, spokesman for the National Kitchen and Bath Association.

Although it is most often paired visually with the family room, today's kitchen has developed its own identity as a complex and dynamic space designed to play host to a variety of functions — often all going on at the same time. "The kitchen is no longer just an expanded keeping room," says Stephanie Witt, a Certified Master Kitchen and Bath Designer (CMKBD) and founder of Kitchens by Stephanie, a Grand Rapids, Mich.-based full-service design studio. "It really has become the



CABINETRY CAN DEFINE THE BOUNDARY

between the kitchen and adjoining living areas without compromising the spacious feel of today's open floor plans. In this formal French-style kitchen, designed by Nancy Braamse of Olde World Cabinetry, Largo, Fla., glass doors and passthrough compartments create a room divider that does not restrict view. PHOTOGRAPHY BY CPS COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SER-

main place in the home where people gather. With today's open floor plans, you simply can't keep guests out of the kitchen."

From providing storage space for food and utensils to handling meal preparation and cleanup, to serving as the social center of the home, a well-designed kitchen must do it all — and look its best at all times.

Manufacturers have responded to consumer demand with a myriad of options not only in appliance design, configuration, and technology, but by also offering countless choices in finishes and materials for everything from countertops, to cabinetry, to fixtures, to flooring.

Treasured islands

Functionally, there is no element that continues to be more important in the kitchen than the island, according to Paula DenBoer a interior designer with Ashley P. Designs Scottsdale, Ariz. "They're huge. Literally every kitchen that we do features an island of some type," she says.

The workhorse of today's kitchen, the island, not only provides additional counter space, but often includes a food prep sink (sometimes two)



THE BREAKFAST NOOK, which provides space for informal dining, continues to be a key design element in most kitchen plans according to Paula DenBoer of Ashley P. Designs, Scottsdale, Ariz.
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DINO TONN

and room enough for scaled-down, but handy, appliances such as refrigerated drawers, a minifreezer, trash compactor as well as a separate cooktop. The island also often doubles as a snack bar with a separate spot in its design dedicated to pullup seating. Finally, the kitchen island helps to eliminate countertop clutter by providing out-of-sight storage space for small appliances.

"We hide everything that we can in them," says Witt, "so that we can eliminate the more traditional, corner appliance garage that I think can interfere with the visual flow of the counter space."

"Single level islands are the most functional in terms of usable counter space," says CMKBD, Nancy Braamse, of Olde World Cabinetry in Largo, Fla. "But a multi-level island can be wonderful for hiding clutter or what's going on in the kitchen from people in the adjoining rooms."

Hide and seek finishes

Braamse, who is also a certified interior designer, says that the popularity of integrated appliances — including refrigerators, dishwashers, and warming drawers, that can be disguised behind panels that match the surrounding cabinetry — "goes hand in hand with the trend toward making the kitchen more suitable as an entertaining space. You really want to disguise pretty much everything that you can, particularly when that appliance is really large like a refrigerator."

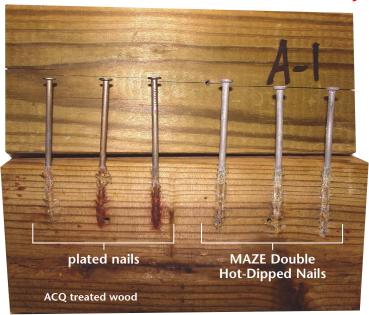
Witt agrees that there has been a significant surge in the demand for integrated appliances

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Plans and Projects

among her clients. "We have some kitchens where you would be hard-pressed to find all the appliances unless you knew where they were already!"

Still, the commercial-style look of sleek stainless steel appliances remains a popular choice in all markets, Witt says. Manufacturers such as Frigidaire and Sub-Zero have responded to complaints about maintaining the shine of stainless steel and reducing its tendency for collecting fingerprints by offering a variety of premium coatings that offer the same look without the upkeep

High-tech haven

Manufacturers continue to develop appliances which are increasingly sophisticated in an effort to simplify things for today's on-the-go consumer — virtually transforming the kitchen into the high-tech center of the home. To speed things up, new ovens which feature thermal, convection and microwave cooking modes from manufacturers like General Electric, promise to cook food much faster than a conventional oven.

In response to demand for healthier methods for preparing meals, manufacturers such as KitchenAid, Miele and Gaggenau have introduced convection steam ovens which allow cooked foods to retain more of their nutritional value and eliminate the need for added fats during the cooking process. TIMO has even introduced an oven that features a built-in refrigeration mode which allows frozen meals to be placed in the oven in the morning, kept chilled throughout the day, and then cooked either by a preset timer, or controlled remotely by phone, so that a hot dinner will be ready



THIS CONTEMPORARY FLORIDA HOME,

built by Daniel E. Ashline, Inc., features stainless steel appliances, high-tech lighting and a two-tone cabinets made of birdseye maple and mahogany. Counters are granite. (Right) A mantel-style hood transforms the range into a dramatic focal point in this Arizona kitchen. PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

and waiting at the end of the day. Induction cooktops, which provide an alternative to conventional gas or electric versions, use magnetic energy coupled with specially designed stainless steel or cast iron cookware, rather than direct surface heat, to cook foods. Although it has been used for decades in Europe, induction cooking is now gaining attention as an alternative in the U.S. and manufacturers such as Wolf are intro-



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- High-tech, interactive appliances
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- Euro-style cabinetry featuring clean lines and unconventional shapes
- New options in interior shelving for cabinets
- Alternative countertop finishes
- Designer-linked product lines

*Courtesy of the National Kitchen and Bath Association

ducing their own versions to the market.

Braamse is enthusiastic about new drawer-style microwave ovens, which put the appliance at waist height, permitting food to be checked and stirred during the cooking process without having to be removed from the oven. Sharp Electronics offers not only a separate microwave drawer unit, but also a model with its own built-in cooktop, or both combined with a full-size range.

Refrigerators, too, have kept pace with today's new technology by offering better energy efficiency than ever before, multi-zone temperature control capabil-











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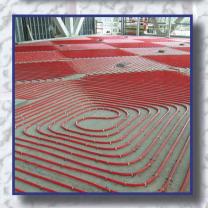


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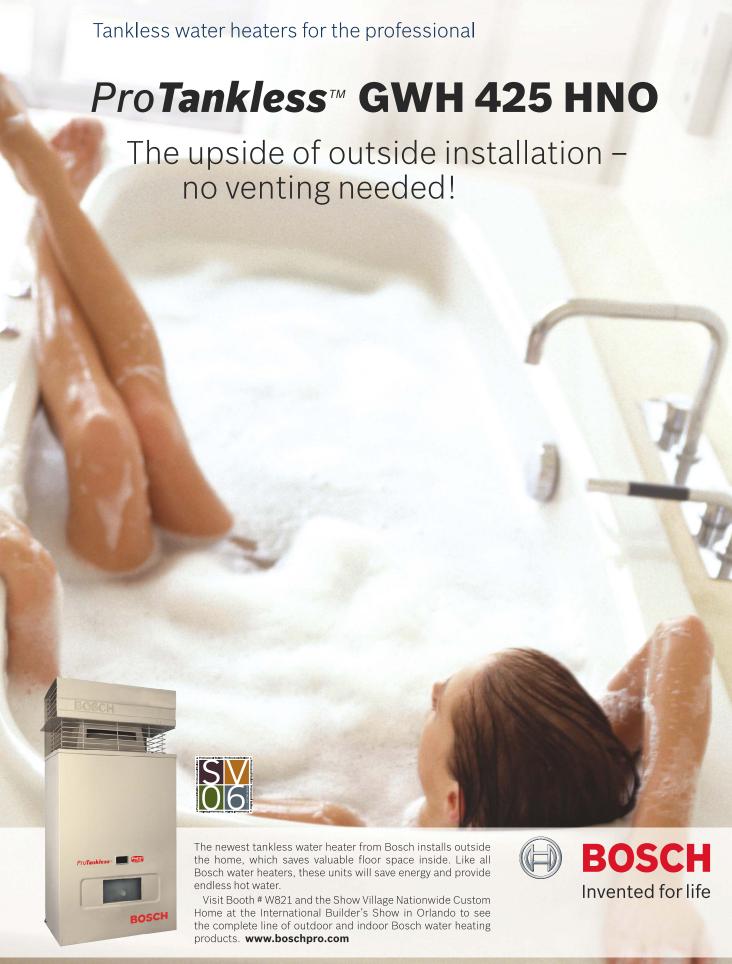
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ities and enough configuration possibilities to match any scenario a kitchen designer can dream up. "The trend is the break up the refrigeration in the kitchen into separate components," says Witt.

Manufacturers offer everything from free-standing models, to fully integrated versions you may not recognize as a refrigerator at all, to counter-height versions designed to be incorporated into an island or butler's pantry.

And specialty appliances including stand alone ice makers, built-in beverage centers, instant hot water dispensers and wine chillers, once found only in the realm of ultra-high-end custom kitchens, are being incorporated in more modestly-priced applications today.

"Wireless internet access has been terrific for incorporating the computer into the kitchen," Braamse says. "We can easily incorporate a notebook computer into an inconspicuous spot using either a flip down screen or pop up from a drawer and give a cook instant access to their archive of recipes or the ability to look them up online."

With the plethora of electronics designed into today's kitchens, even the most technologically-savvy consumers may find themselves challenged when it comes to feeling at home in their kitchen. What do the experts recommend? "With all new appliances there is a learning curve that people face when getting familiar with using them," says Witt. "I advise my clients simplify wherever they can. For example, if they have two ovens, I suggest they choose two that are either the same or, at the very least, from the same manufacturer."

Natural beauty

Cabinetry not only provides practical storage space in the kitchen but also enhances the décor of the home itself. "It continues to be the single largest expense in the kitchen budget," says Witt. "A rule of thumb for new construction of a custom home is that approximately 10 to 15 percent of the total market value of the house should be allocated for cabinetry." Witt specifies cabinetry from custom manufactures Rutt and Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry for her high-end projects and semi-custom cabinets from Medallion Cabinetry for

more modest applications.

"While kitchens are becoming more elegant in terms of their finishes," says custom builder, Gordon Gibson, of Santa Monica, Calif., "they're also becoming a lot more fun and eclectic in style."

DenBoer agrees. "There is a lot less color matching when it comes to all of the cabinetry." she says. "Instead, we may use different but complementary finishes to highlight different areas. For example, we may want to accent the island by using a different color finish and even trim style than that used for the perimeter cabinets."

"Cabinets are also becoming simpler in terms of door style and embellishment," Witt says. The most popular finishes are those that permit the natural grain and beauty of the wood to show through.

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WITH ITS FREEFORM DESIGN AND SLOPING BOWL, the Mystic sink by Elkay adds a unique, yet highly functional, accent for contemporary applications. The undermount design is compatible with any solid surface countertop.



Because of its tendency to collect everyday clutter, the built-in desk, or organization center, has been permanently banished from today's kitchen. "I have not built a home with a built-in desk in the kitchen in several years, says Tampa, Fla.-based builder, Jay Fechtel. "This function is now handled by creating a separate computer alcove near the kitchen or removing it altogether to the home office."

Top it all off

"There are more options for countertops than ever before," Witt says. "Twenty-five years ago laminates were the big thing in countertops but today consumers have a lot more good choices so they can pick what is best for them in terms of budget and style."

Granite remains a top choice as a countertop surface and is becoming more affordable, Braamse says, "but it is losing its shine in terms of finish. We are using a lot more honed, or flamed granite, which does not need to be polished."

"Manufactured quartz products are very low maintenance and do not need to be sealed at all," Witt says. In addition, they offer homeowners greater variety in color selection and as well as more uniformity of color throughout, but remain significantly higher priced than other options and are typically used only for high-end applications. Concrete and stainless steel are also good choices for custom projects.

We are also seeing a resurgence of wood as a popular countertop finish, Braamse says. "But rather than the conventional butcher-block tops from the past we're seeing the use of exotic woods such as black walnut, Brazilian cherry and teak."

Finishing touches

The most popular look in cabinetry hardware and plumbing fixtures today are the soft, distressed finishes, Braamse says. "Brushed nickel continues to be number one, but I am seeing a lot more brushed brass as well, which gives the kitchen a warmer tone."

Tile remains the top choice for the backsplash finish, Witt says, who also uses tumbled marble, glass, etched stone and beadboard. Metallic accent tiles, or "tile jewelry," can be used to add a custom touch.

Depending on the style of the home and the buyer's budget, wood, natural stone, and ceramic tile remain the most popular choices for flooring in the kitchen, say the experts. "But I am also seeing the emergence of cork as a popular option in my market," says Braamse. It is very attractive and provides a soft, resilient surface for walking and standing on. **PB**



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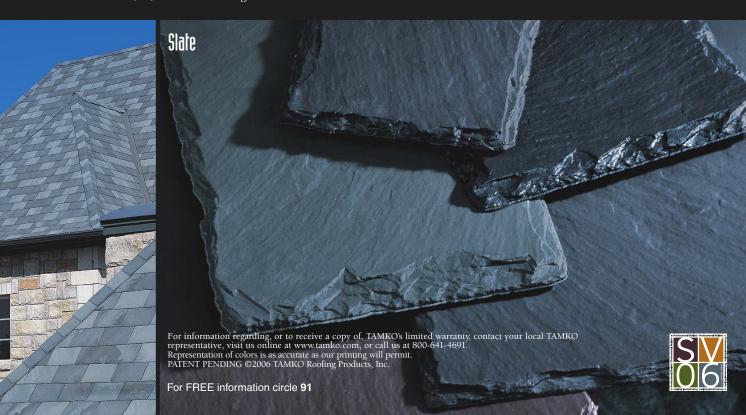
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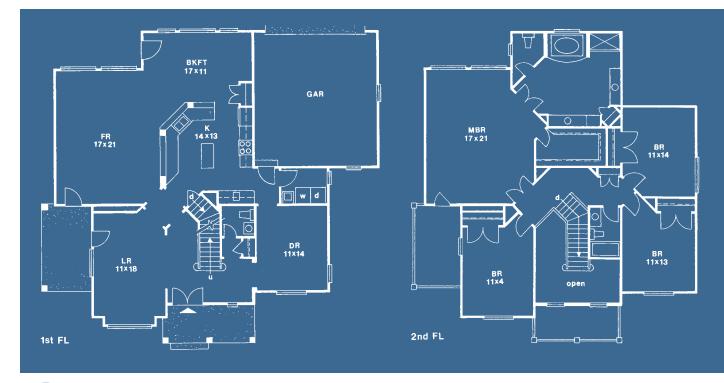


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HOW I SOLVED

Reaching Move-Up Buyers

This plan sells well in Charles Town, W.V., but before the builder begins production of this same home in Loudoun County, Va., it would like to enhance a few weak spots.

The problem with plan

According to the builder, Juniper Hill is currently selling at \$425,000 in Charles Town, W.V. Although the plan currently has some weak spots, the price needs to increase when built in the next location, Loudoun County, Va., which means the plans need to be adjusted to make this happen. Principal architect, Barry Glantz provided this builder with the changes needed to make this plan what it needs to be for the next neighborhood. The following five items were requested by the builder to have changed:

- 1. The front stairs are too close to the front door.
- 2. The family room is too open to the kitchen.
- 3. There is no den.
- **4.** The closets in the Owner's bedroom are not large enough for the suite.
- 5. The hall bath is too small.

Solutions

Glantz came up with the following solutions:

1. To increase the amount of space in the front of the stairs, move the front door out I foot 6 inches. This adds 2I

square feet to the space, while still allowing for an offset in the front elevation of the house.

- **2.** To allow for more privacy and separation from the family room to the kitchen, make the bookshelves full height on the family room side. This also allows for additional upper cabinets in the kitchen.
- **3.** To create space for a den, bump out a portion of the original living room wall to be even with the family room. This allows for the creation of a den in the remaining space. To create interest in the new living room, add 8 inches decorative columns on top of a 1 foot 6-inch high knee wall with an arched opening.
- **4.** Add the closet space from bedroom #2 to the master suite closet. Then add a second closet between bedrooms #2 and #3 for bedroom #2, and move the linen closet from the hallway to the space between bedrooms #2 and #3. This reduces the overall size of the master bedroom by 2 feet but adds space to the master suite closet.
- **5.** To increase the size of the hall bath, bump the hall wall out I foot, and relocate the hall linen closet (based on solution #4). This allows space for a 48-inch vanity instead of a 36-inch vanity. **PB**

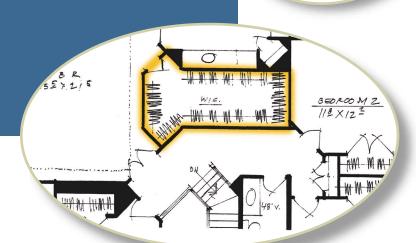


GLANTZ CREATED A DEN by bumping out a portion of the original living room wall (shown left).

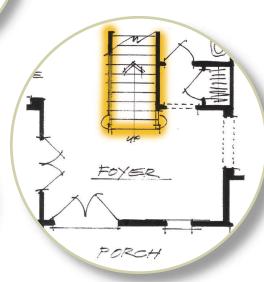
ADDING AND REDUCING CLOSET SPACE among the bedrooms reduces the overall size of the master bedroom by 2 feet but adds

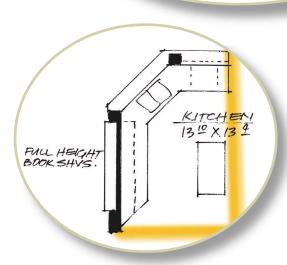
space to the master suite closet (shown left, below)

MOVING THE FRONT DOOR OUT creates more space to the foyer (shown below).



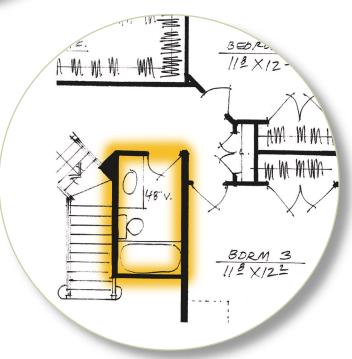
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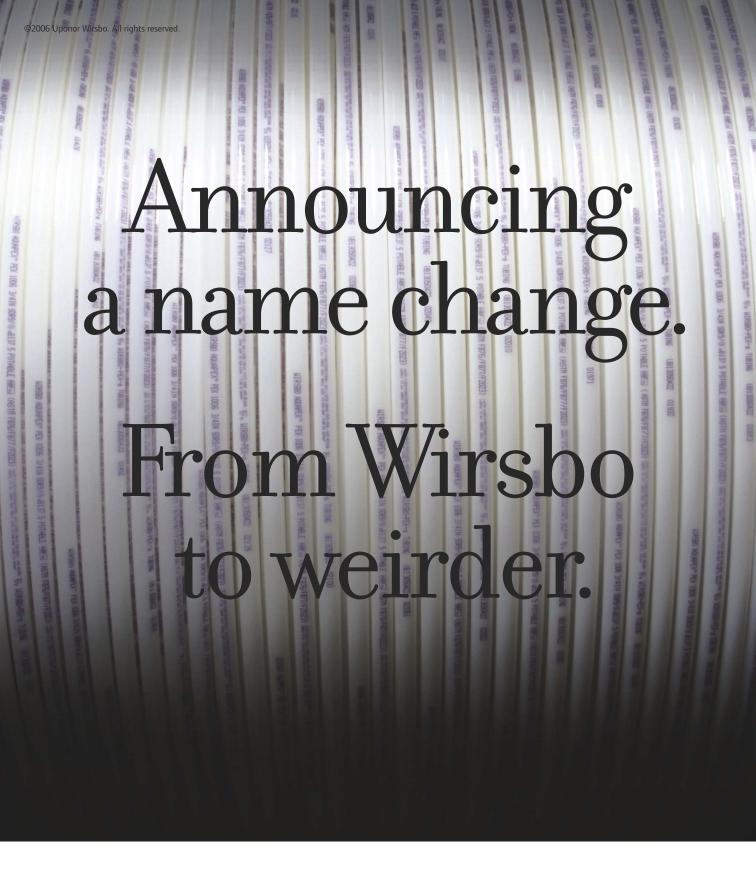




TO ALLOW FOR MORE PRIVACY, raise the bookshelves on the family room side to full height (shown above).

BY BUMPING OUT THE HALL WALL, Glantz created space for a larger vanity in the hall bathroom (shown right).





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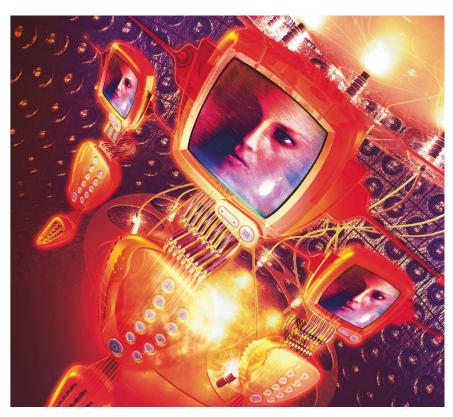
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Proactive Solutions

Going Automated

From basic home theater to whole-house lighting and security, builders can find opportunity in automated homes.



Imagine having complete access to your iPod tunes and favorite satellite radio shows at the touch of a button on panels located throughout the home via a distributed audio system. Picture being able to see who is at the front door with a security camera you can view from your television or home PC. Homebuyers have unmet needs for a growing range of home automation applications, say technology experts, which represents an open frontier for builders.

Home automation uses computers to control basic home functions automatically, sometimes remotely. Home automation runs the gamut from lighting, audio-video, security systems, HVAC, water sprinklers and more. Most automated applications start with structured pre-wiring to run through the walls of the house to connect lights, tele-

phones, speakers, and televisions to a network of computers and electronics, often located in the basement, attic or ample-sized closet.

While more than half of builders showcasing structured wiring in one or more of their homes, only about 39 percent of all new homes feature the necessary wiring to deliver home automation,

according to findings by the NAHB Research Center in its 2004 Builder Practices survey.

Pre-wire first

"Builders need to consider home automation. When you are pushing granite countertops, you've got to address structural pre-wiring," says Frank White, partner in StayTuned Consulting, a residential technology consulting firm in Brea, Calif. White says given consumer reliance on staying connected to e-mail, the Internet and heavy use of television among other technologies, builders have missed the mark on meeting consumer demand for automation.

At present, there are no agreed-upon industry standards and definitions of what constitutes a structured pre-wire. White, for example, suggests in addition to the basics such as regular telephone wiring and using only UL-listed cable, basic structural wiring could include two runs of Category 5 or 6 to each mediarelated outlet and 2 runs of RG 6 (quad variety if desired) for video. "This will enable the home to communicate within itself and to the outside world effectively," he says.

Considering costs

With smart marketing to differentiate their products from competitors, builders can come out ahead when building in various levels of home automation in their spec and production models, says John Cioe, technology consultant and general partner with Newport Custom Homes in Scottsdale, Ariz. "It costs about \$2 to \$3 per square foot to properly pre-wire a home for things like lighting, HDTV and motorized drape control," Cioe says, noting a pre-wire for a typical home costs about \$4,000 to \$6,000.





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Proactive Solutions

Builders need to remember retrofitting is always significantly more expensive, says Bob Woods, audio video systems designer with Appollo Systems, low-voltage systems integrator in Maple Grove, Minn. "Get as much wire in for unknown future needs. Wire is cheap. Tearing down walls and sheetrock later is expensive." With adequate pre-wiring, costs to finish an audio-video system incorporating home theater can range from anywhere from \$1,000 to upwards

of \$150,000 on elaborate systems, Woods says.

White says on the low end of distributed audio, home theater and other audio-visual considerations — the three most popular forms of home automation, according to the leading industry trade group CEDIA

(Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association) — an entry level package can start at \$20,000 or less. A mid-range package goes to \$75,000 including theater and media server access to music and video to upwards of \$500,000 for deluxe systems, he says.

Planning and installs

No longer can installations of home automation systems be relegated to electricians or hobbyists. A plethora of firms specialize in home installation of automation systems including infrastructure wiring of new homes, home networking, integrated control systems, HVAC, lighting, etc. Experts recommend seeking out a CEDIA-member firm. "Make sure the firm you use has CEDIA-certified installers," Woods says.

Cioe generally advises builders to plan for home automation up front in the design stage by bringing in HVAC contractors to make sure networking equipment and other electronics have ample cooling and designers to honor space and aesthetic considerations. Particularly involving upper-bracket homes, Cioe says builders need to "future proof" their product. "Anyone who is buying a high-end home wants to make sure their home isn't obsolete the day they move in. There's tremendous opportunity for builders to establish themselves in this niche."

Partnering and marketing savvy

Builders who are serious about expanding their home automation offerings should form partnerships with

home automation experts, including lighting and other lowvoltage systems installers. "Some companies are only geared toward the end user. Talk to a CEDIAtrained firm that has a relationship serving builders," Cioe advises. The same goes for bringing in the home-

buyer early in the process. "Builders need to let home technology firms work with their clients from day one," he says.

Woods advises builders new to home automation to limit their scope to a few tiers of automation packages, such as a basic pre-wire package, a moderately-priced package with audio-video basics, and a higher-end version featuring zoned lighting control systems by AMX or Creston and security features.

Lastly, Cioe advises builders to talk in terms of capabilities to customers. "The user doesn't need to know a Category 5 network cable from a 14/4 speaker cable. Tell them from this touch panel you can control lighting, air conditioning and Internet cameras for security," he says.

Marcia Jedd is a Minneapolis-based freelance writer and communications consultant.

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Wood vs. **Engineered** Lumber

Wood or Engineered Lumber? In this new column, we take a look at the pros and cons of wood versus engineered lumber.

For years, builders have used traditional lumber to build homes; however, ever since engineered lumber came into the picture, builders have been left wondering — which one do I use for my projects?

With current industry production of more than a billion lineal feet a year (2003 production) and a rate of increase of over 20 percent per year, engineered lumber is gaining popularity among builders.

Traditional solid sawn lumber is still a very popular choice for builders primarily due to familiarization with the product. The costs for solid sawn lumber are initially lower, but product quality issues can become costly for builders to correct after installation. Dimensional lumber is also limited to smaller depths and lengths since their size is dependent on the size of the timber cut to make them.

PHOTOS COURTESY APA - THE ENGINEERED WOOD ASSOCIATION

According to the APA — Engineered The Wood Association, North American production of most engineered wood products is forecast to rise significantly over the next five years. The growth of engineered wood products is testimony to the technological adaptability of the wood products industry in the face of a changing wood fiber resource base.

"With less traditional and public forest timber available for wood product manufacturing, producers have had to improve existing methods and invent new ways to make more with less, and with alternative wood fiber resources," Jack Merry, communications director at the APA — The Engineered Wood Association. "The industry is responding with marked success to that challenge."

Although the term engineered lumber is used to describe a variety of materials, most are defined as structural components that have been fabricated. Engineered wood is manufactured by bonding together wood strands, veneers, lumber or other forms of wood fiber to produce a larger and integral composite unit that is stronger and stiffer than the sum of its parts.



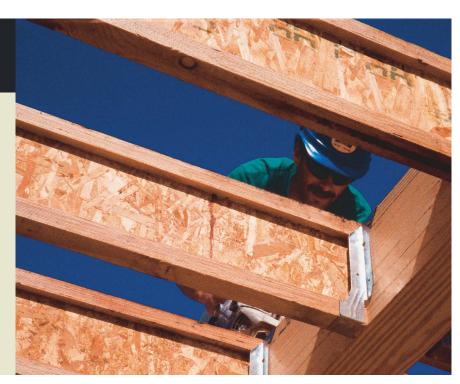
Producers have had to **improve** existing methods and invent new ways to make more with less, and with alternative wood fiber resources."

Probably the most significant contributor to increased use of engineered lumber is the total installed costs are less than that of dimensional lumber. Additional benefits are related to ease of installation, dimensional stability, and structural integrity of engineered products. "Engineered wood products actually improve upon many of the inherent structural advantages of wood," adds Merry. "Cross-laminated plywood and oriented strand board, for example, distribute loads along-the-grain strength of wood in both panel axes. Glulam beams and wood I-



STRENGTH CHARACTERISTICS OF I-JOISTS RELATIVE TO CONVENTIONAL WOOD FRAMING

With respect to conventional framing (16 inches or 19.2 inches on center joist spacing), I-joists are 50 percent stiffer than solid sawn lumber. In terms of strength, for simple spans, an I-joist series with the lowest design values (PRI-20) can span to within inches of the strongest solid sawn lumber joist (S. Pine). In multiple span situations, I-joists have an advantage because solid sawn lumber in lengths greater than 20 feet is quite rare and expensive. Building dealers and I-joist manufacturers have substitution analysis software and can provide this service free of charge in most cases.



joists can carry greater loads over longer spans than is possible with solid sawn wood of the same size," adds Merry.

An engineered solution

Consistency of the material quality is the key advantage of engineered wood. Fabricated from dry materials to very tight manufacturing standards, wood I-joists generally do not shrink, warp, cup, crown, or twist. Quality assurance programs are required during manufacturing to ensure final products of uniform strength and stiffness. These factors all contribute the product's dimensional stability.

manufacturing The processes required for wood products add costs, making engineered wood more expensive per lineal foot than traditional sawn lumber. "The benefit is realized in total installed cost of the product," according to Mike O'Day, manager of engineered lumber for Georgia Pacific. "The installed costs consist of material usage, and labor requirements for installation. Engineered lumber can speed installation time and reduce labor since they are lighter and can be spaced further apart than dimensional lumber. The result is typically a lower total installed cost per

square foot with engineered lumber," adds O'Day. Engineered lumber also reduces the number of call backs for builders. Squeaky, or bouncy floors are usually expensive to correct. Installations using engineered I-beams can significantly reduce callbacks related to this problem.

Manufactured wood products are also environmentally friendly. "With the advent of forest farming as a primary source of wood fiber in the U.S., it is getting exceedingly difficult to find a resource that will permit the milling of larger pieces of framing lumber. Wood I-joists can be manufactured in depths exceeding 48 inches and lengths over 40 feet and use up to 60 percent less wood fiber than solid-sawn joists. On the job site there is little or no waste," adds Edward L. Keith, P.E., senior engineer for the APA — The Engineered Wood Association.

In addition to the common nominal 10 and 12 inch depths, engineered I-joists are made in depths beyond that of traditional framing lumber. Depths up to 48 inches and lengths limited only by ground transportation and handling are available to builders. An advantage over

lumber is that a deeper I-joist member is only incrementally more expensive than a shallower member because it is made deeper by adding more web material. Ordering I-joists that are cut to the exact length required means 100 percent utilization in the field, resulting in little or no waste on the jobsite.

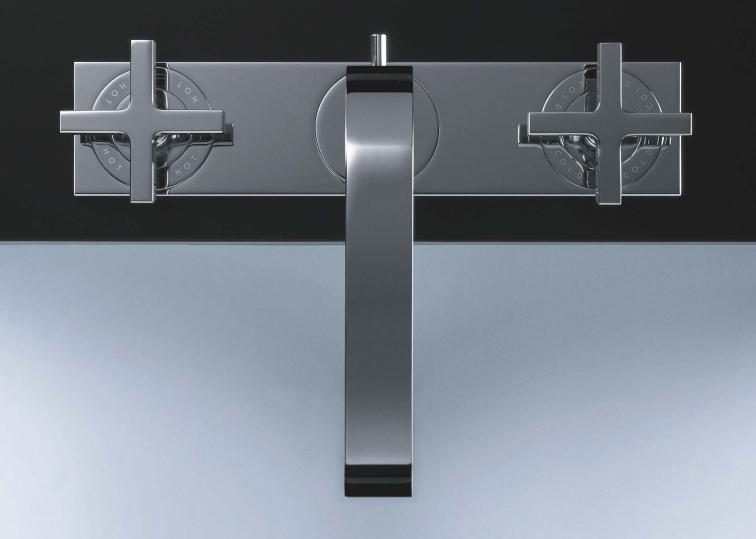
Because of their "I" cross sectional shape, they weigh up to 60 percent less than lumber joists making them easier to handle. The flange permits a firm, comfortable, secure grip even when the joist is wet or covered with wood dust. A single worker can easily handle a joist up to 25-40 feet in length.

Limitations

Like traditional lumber, engineered lumber does have its limitations. The key to understanding acceptable applications is in education of the materials. Currently, most engineered wood products are limited to interior use.

Resistance to specifying engineered lumber generally comes from subcontractors that are not familiar with the product. Subs need to be careful when installing plumbing and electricity that must be routed through engineered

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Builder Program

KEY TERMS

Prefabricated Wood I-Joists are structural, load-carrying products. I-joists are typically available in long lengths and because they are very lightweight can be easily handled at the jobsite without the need for costly handling equipment. Their "I" configuration provides high bending strength and stiffness characteristics

Glue Laminated Timber is an engineered stress-rated product created by bonding together individual pieces of lumber having a thickness of 2 inches (50 mm) or less. Individual pieces of lumber are end-joined together to create long lengths referred to as laminations. These laminations are then face-bonded together to create the finished product.

Laminated Veneer Lumber (LVL): LVL is produced by bonding thin wood veneers together in a large billet so that the grain of all veneers is parallel to the long direction.



lumber. Careful consideration needs to be taken where and how it is cut. "Holes less than 1.5 inches diameter are generally okay as long as they're not on, or into the flange. Drilling through the web material is normally an acceptable practice," says, O'Day.

Damage to wood I-joists within a structural system is normally associated with notching of the flanges or misapplication of the manufacturer's web hole information. Designing a repair for a damaged I-joist can be very difficult and requires an understanding of I-joists, adhesives and fasteners that may not be familiar to many designers. Fortunately, most manufacturers are more than willing to provide fixes for most applications. There are a number of products currently working through the code acceptance system that can be used in the field to restore the joist to its full capacity without having to have the solution engineered.

Industry trends

Installations using engineered lumber have increased over the last 10 years due to education of the materials and their advantages. Ten years ago, fewer than 30 percent of the floors used engineered lumber and in 2004 almost 50 percent of new homes have I-joists installed. **PB**



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Rising Tides

Flood-resistant materials help defend against storm surge

Katrina. Rita. Wilma. The hurricanes of 2005 dramatically illustrate the importance of building durable, disaster-resistant homes.

As rebuilding begins in the South, the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) suggests some changes in building materials and practices that will make new homes more flood-resistant. PATH's recommendations are based on findings from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). Also included are recommendations from FEMA.

FEMA Recommendations

FEMA defines flood-resistant material as any building material capable of withstanding direct and prolonged contact — 72 hours or more — with floodwaters without sustaining significant damage that requires more than low-cost cosmetic repair.

To qualify how well materials meet this standard, FEMA uses a classification system with I through 5 rankings. Class 5 is defined as "highly resistant to floodwater damage. Materials within this class are permitted for partially enclosed or outside uses with essentially unmitigated flood exposure." Class I materials are not resistant.

For structures below the base flood elevation in floodprone areas, FEMA says only Class 4 and Class 5 materials are acceptable. However, materials in other classes are

PHOTOGRAHY: JOCELYN AUGUSTINO/FEMA

deemed acceptable when specifically required to meet building code provisions that cite health and safety issues.

Within these rankings, FEMA separates housing construction materials into two categories: flooring materials and wall and ceiling materials.

For flooring materials, clay and concrete tiles, as well as precast and in-situ concrete, are ranked as Class 5, the most flood resistant. Other materials — such as asphalt tile, cork, linoleum, vinyl and wood flooring — are ranked Class I, 2 or 3, and are therefore not flood-resistant by FEMA's definition. Materials in these classes are or contain wood products, they restrict evaporation, are dimensionally unstable or their adhesives are water soluble.

The best-performing wall and ceiling materials according to FEMA are brick, cement board, metals and glass. For those preferring wood, pressure-treated and naturally decay-resistant solid wood is Class 5 material, as is marine-grade and pressure-treated plywood.

PATH Recommendations

While FEMA has a very practical classification system, it is based on a somewhat limited definition: components, materials and systems must



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NEW ORLEANS, LA, SEPTEMBER 2, 2005 – Flooding in New Orleans post-Katrina.

be able to withstand prolonged contact with flood water without requiring more than cosmetic repair.

ORNL expanded that definition to include materials that do not degrade adjacent materials or systems of which the materials are a part. The cost of repair should be less than the cost of replacement, and the material should be resistant to microbes, organisms and toxic materials that could harm human health.

In June 2004, ORNL released a study on field tests of flood-resistant housing materials based on this expanded definition. PATH has developed recommendations from the ORNL study:

■ **Siding.** Fiber cement or vinyl siding resist flood dam-

age far more effectively than traditional hardboard lap and plywood siding. Fiber cement and vinyl dry more quickly and are also termite resistant. And while fiber cement siding is more expensive than vinyl, it is also non-combustible; can be warranted for 50 years; and holds paint much longer than hardboard and plywood siding.

Substituting trim and corner boards made of plastic or wood/plastic composite is likely to be more cost-effective than having to replace sawn wood trim after a flood.

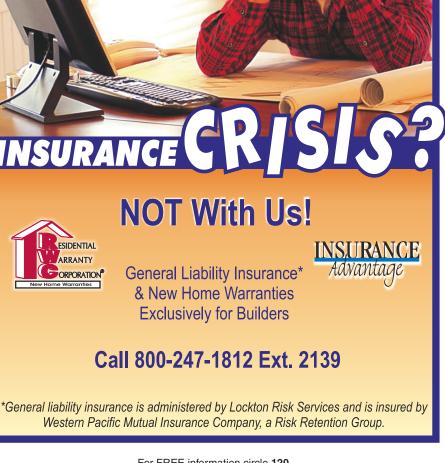
insulation. Sheathing and Plywood sheathing with flood- and damage-resistant lap siding dries much better than plywood sheathing covered with plywood siding. If the area is prone to wind-driven rain, a builder should incorporate a drainage plane behind the siding to allow water to drain quickly.

Construct a drainage plane by spacing the siding or use new, weather-resistant barriers with structures that facilitate drainage.

Avoid using fiberglass batt or other moisture-retaining insulation in the exterior cavity and subfloor, which will prevent wooden walls and floors from drying. Use rigid foam insulation, especially as an outer layer of insulation, instead.

Even more effective is spray polyurethane foam insulation, which resists moisture and seals the walls. Spray polyurethane is much more expensive than fiberglass batt, but it also seals air leaks, which will increase the home's energy efficiency and reduce entry points for pests.

- Drywall. Water-resistant, fiberreinforced gypsum can generally be restored to preflood conditions with only cosmetic restoration. Standard gypsum board that is able to dry completely can generally be restored to preflood conditions with similar treatment; however, board that has soaked too long probably harbors mold and will need to be replaced. If you choose standard gypsum wallboard, pick one with a nonpaper skin.
- Wall finishes. Standard drywall compound and paper joint tape perform very poorly under flood conditions. Quick-setting joint compound and fiberglass tape are generally a great improvement. When used with water-resistant gypsum sheathing and quality paint, these materials should require minimal repair.
- Exterior doors and windows. When selecting door types and materials, most exterior doors and vinyl and aluminum frame windows can generally be restored to pre-flood conditions with minimal effort, but do not fill the joints between the outside of the door or window frame and the rough opening with compressed fiberglass insulation, which may retain excessive moisture. Fill with low-expansion foam instead. PB



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Amsco offers a wide selection of premium vinyl windows and resin composite windows that deliver energy efficiency, low maintenance and strength. Equipped with the optional StyleLock system, homeowners can be confident that the per-

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In My Own Words

"Amsco Legacy Series Windows provide commercial-grade windows with low-E coating at an affordable cost. Low-E windows significantly reduce heat loss through the windows in the winter — a feature that is very valuable in our climate, where temperatures are often in the low teens during the cold season."

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In My Own Words

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Moen Faucets www.moen.com

Moen's Mannerly Powder Room Collection features romantic Victorian styling with widespread and wall-mount high arc faucets with swiveling spouts in LifeShine Polished Nickel. The widespread faucet features a bridge design, while cross handles have two sets of ceramic caps that spell "hot" and "cold" in English and French. The collection's signature accessory is a whimsical "Vacant/Occupied" sliding door sign in English and French.

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In My Own Words

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In My Own Words

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Mediterranea

Mediterranea introduces the Valentino Series. This Italian-designed Tuscan travertine combines natural colors and the variegation of satin-finished marble. This glazed porcelain is available in three colors: Ivory Bianco, Cream Beige and Champagne Gold. These tiles can be installed as a flooring or wall surface and are available in 18-X 18- inch field tiles with a matching 3- X 18- inch surface bullnose.

www.mediterranea-usa.com Circle 131 on inquiry card



www.junckershardwood.com Circle 130 on inquiry card

Armstrong Laminate Floors

Armstrong has a new line of laminate flooring. are produced with Armstrong's Masterworks Technology. This technology combines photo-realism with printing and embossing techniques for realistic replicas of hardwood strip, weathered stone, natural stone and traditional brick. Armstrong's new laminate floors also feature Armstrong's VisionGuard wear surface. VisionGuard preserves the printed visual of the floor design from fading and wear-through. Also, the new Lock & Fold has a straight lock and fold down installation that eliminates the need for tapping blocks which can damage ends. The HydraCore moisture protection makes the laminates resistant to surface spills or moisture wicking from the subfloor making them suitable for bathroom applications. www.armstrong.com Circle 132 on inquiry card



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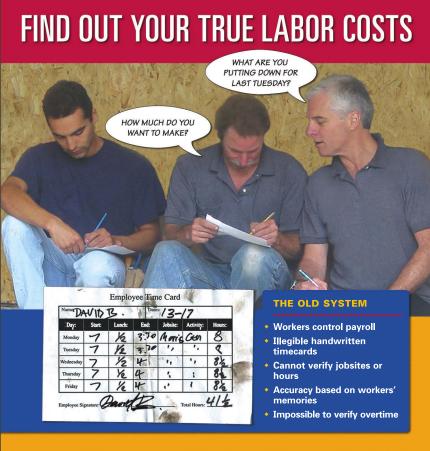
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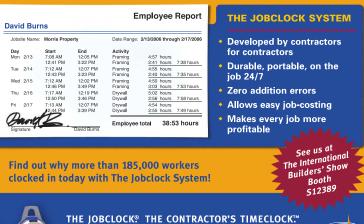
BHK introduces its latest cork flooring, Moderna Toledo. This glueless cork flooring is available in 10.5 mm and three colors: Natura, Garda and Allegro. This 100 percent cork surface layer can be installed over most other flooring materials. The Moderna Toledo has an UV acrylic finish that provides acoustic insulation. www.bhkuniclic.com Circle 133 on inquiry card





DuraCeramic by Congoleum

Congoleum has added four new designs to its DuraCeramic flooring line. The four new designs, Cambridge Tile, Jasper Marble, Roman Elegance and Mercer Tile replicate fired ceramic tiles, polished marble and slate for a total of 19 coloration options. DuraCeramic Flooring is constructed from a .160-inch limestone composite base which makes it resistant to cracking and breaking. It also absorbs sound. Congoleum's surface glaze which is a combination of aluminum oxide and nylon particles, provides for a realistic surface texture and scratch and stain resistant product. This flooring can be installed with or without grout. There are 12 grout colorations. www.congoleum.com. Circle 134 on inquiry card





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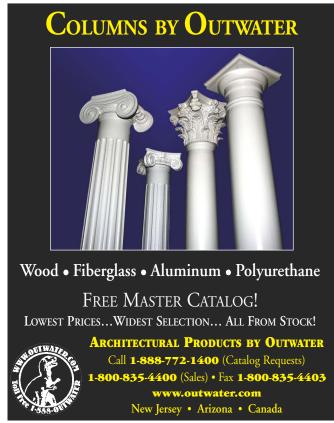
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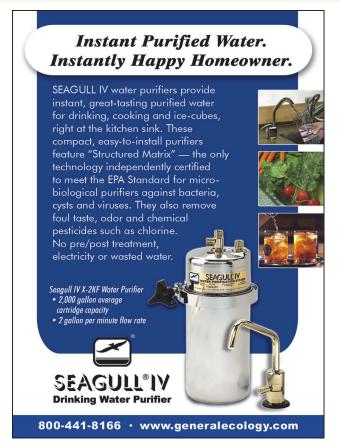


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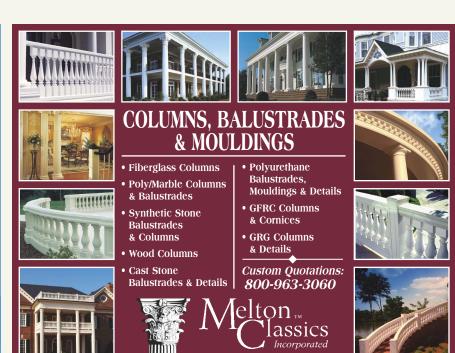
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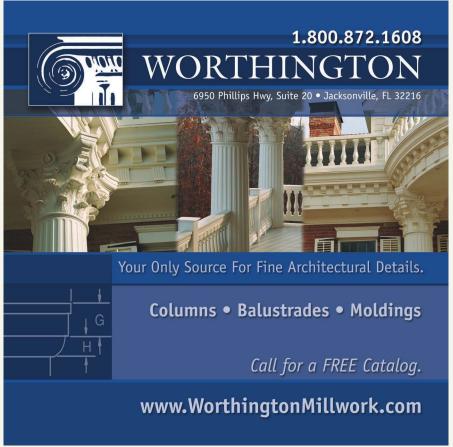
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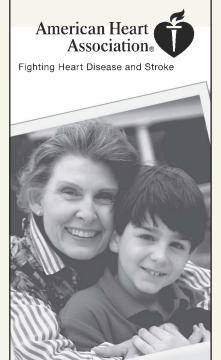


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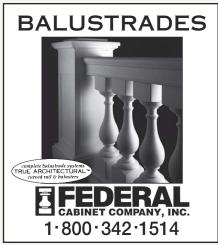
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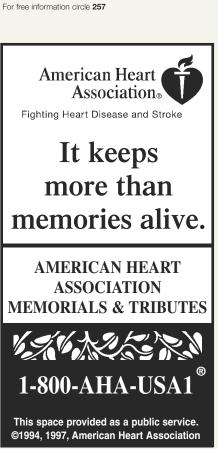
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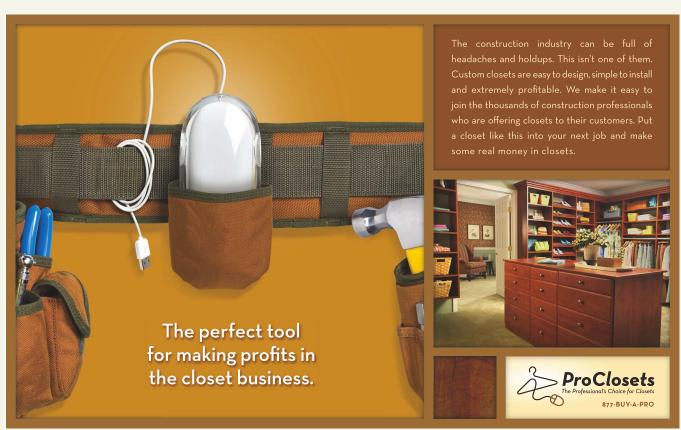
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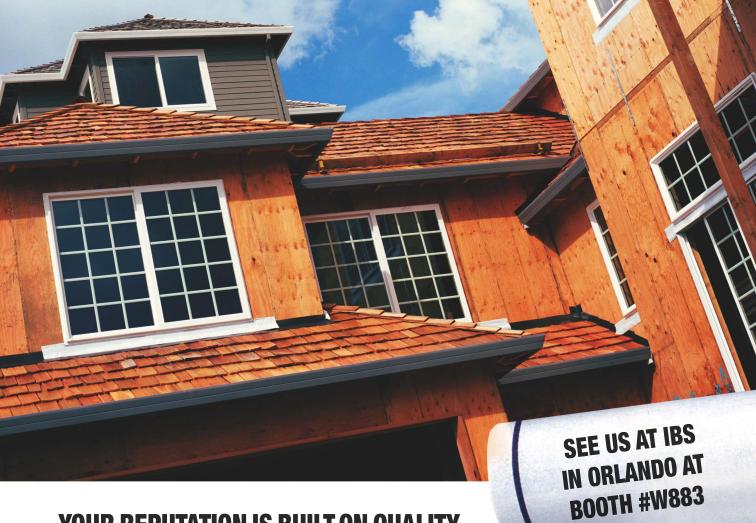
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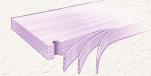


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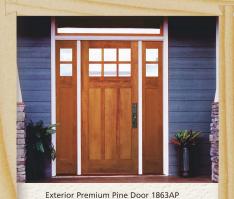
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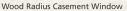
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