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THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL

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JULY 2009

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Builders across the country are engaging the *Environments For Living* program and the *Environments For Living Certified Green* program offered by **Masco Home Services, Inc.** to distinguish their new homes in a competitive market and effectively address the increasing value placed on efficient energy use for heating and cooling and indoor comfort among prospective buyers.

In the majority of communities in which it builds, across seven states, David Weekley Homes offers the *Environments For Living*® program as a part of a comprehensive initiative to deliver high-value housing. "It's a matter of integrity that we are consistent across those markets," says Project Coach, Mike Funk, who leads the effort for one of the nation's largest privately held builders. "If it's right for one buyer, it's right for all of them."

The builder's commitment to the *Environments For Living* program grew from an interest in energy efficiency and building science dating back to the mid-1990s—the same foundation that inspired and continues to inform the only national turnkey program of its kind from Masco Home Services, a Masco company. "We were able to ramp up to the program standards because of the improvements we'd made already," says Funk. "The *Environments For*

Living program is just a logical next step for us, and as it continues to move forward, so do we."

In addition to establishing a high benchmark for housing performance, specifically energy use for heating and cooling and for indoor comfort, the *Environments For Living* program provides participating builders like David Weekley Homes with an unprecedented and unmatched marketing tool: the only performance guarantee offered by a national green-labeling program. "That's an easy concept for buyers to understand and a real opportunity for us to stand out in the market," says Funk, especially considering the current housing climate and the near-saturation of builders marketing themselves as "green," regardless of how (or whether) that term is defined.

To eliminate any mystery and give the program its teeth, the *Environments For Living* limited

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE *ENVIRONMENTS FOR LIVING*® PROGRAM

- The limited guarantee on heating and cooling energy-use and comfort is the only one of their kind offered by a national program.
- Builders must follow specific requirements for tight construction, fresh air ventilation, improved thermal systems, right-sized HVAC equipment, air pressure balancing, internal moisture management and combustion safety, among other specifications.
- Builders have several program levels to choose from. Each level has different stringent requirements for construction and performance.
- In addition to providing guidance and tools to builders on how to achieve high-performance homes, the *Environments For Living* program and the *Environments For Living Certified Green* program make available a limited guarantee for heating and cooling energy use and comfort. For complete program details, please visit environmentsforliving.com.
- Builders of any size and in any region of the country can participate, as the standards are adaptable to climate conditions and regional building practices.
- The program's turn-key services include training, a national plan review center, an extensive network for field certification and testing, and help with identifying companies that are able to install products that meet the program requirements.

*See the guarantee for complete details and limitations at www.environmentsforliving.com or call 866-912-7233.

Photos by Rob Muir



guarantee for heating and cooling energy use specifies the amount of energy needed annually to heat and cool the home, as determined by plans and specifications submitted to Masco Home Services' EcoevaluationSM plan review department. Similarly, the program's limited comfort guarantee states that the temperature at the location of the thermostat will not vary more than three degrees from the center of any conditioned room within the thermostat's zone. The limited guarantee provides complete details.

Among the 10 markets in which it applies the *Environments For Living* program standards, Weekley's operation in Houston builds to the program's Platinum level, which also allows the builder in that market to cash in on federal energy tax credits to help offset the cost of high-performance heating and cooling equipment and other products and systems prescribed in the program's standards.

What's perhaps most remarkable, though, is the flexibility afforded to builders using the *Environments For Living* program as the backbone of their commitment to better-built housing. Both prescriptive and performance-based, the program standards do not require the use of any particular product brands and do not require a certain number of points or credits to qualify; rather, builders can work with their existing suppliers and subcontractors to determine the specifications that not only meet the *Environments For Living* program's performance thresholds but also issues of budget, local availability, and marketability.

That flexibility also extends to how builders portray the *Environments For Living* program in their own marketing and sales efforts. David Weekley Homes, for instance, includes the standards as a cornerstone within an in-house Green Home program offered in several markets.

While Funk appreciates that the *Environments For Living* program offers independent, third-party verification of the builder's practices—not to mention performance guarantees and possible tax credits—he also values being able to build and refine David Weekley Homes as a leading brand of high-value housing and superior customer satisfaction. "First and foremost, we're selling David Weekley Homes," he says.

And thanks in many ways to the *Environments For Living* program, David Weekley Homes is one builder that's been able to not just weather the current housing recession, but launch a comprehensive and market-driven green building program during the downturn to gain valuable market share for the industry's eventual recovery. ■

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JULY 2009



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Brave New World

Offering the right product will be critically important for builders struggling to emerge from this catastrophic recession. Our Special Report examines the array of preferences sought by the three buyer segments—Immigrants, Baby Boomers, and Millennials—that will likely drive most of the housing demand in the near future. 42

Dreaming in Color

Immigrant buyers will be a major force in the housing market, and builders who want to tap into this large and growing market segment need to take a fresh look at what kinds of homes these buyers want. Fortunately, foreign-born buyers share some basic wish lists that builders can accommodate, such as the desire for larger homes for extended families. 46

Redesigning Retirement

In just two years, half of all homeowners will be Baby Boomers. As they come out of the current economic meltdown, these mature buyers won't have the financial means to buy the retirement home of their dreams, although their tastes may remain the same. Smaller in size, but higher in quality describes the homes that many of these buyers will be looking for. 52

Hear Them Roar

A new heavyweight has entered the housing market: the Millennial generation, also known as Generation Y. This huge group of young buyers will ultimately change the home buying and building landscape. Their choices will be made based on location instead of size and will lean toward urban or more densely populated areas with a strong emphasis on community. 58

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WHAT'S NEW ON:

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Builder Online

Future Buyers

This month's Special Report, "Brave New World," focusing on the three major home buyer segments—Immigrants, Baby Boomers, and Millennials—that will be driving housing demand in the foreseeable future, continues online at www.builderonline.com/brave-new-world with the full results of the "BUILDER/American Lives New-Home Shopper Survey," video coverage of what Millennials think about buying vs. renting and suburban vs. urban living, and additional profiles of new-home buyers.

BUILDER TV

Two new episodes of BUILDER TV will premier in July featuring BUILDER's senior editor for products Nigel F. Maynard:

- Given the size of the kitchen cabinet category, finding out what's new can be difficult. Nigel takes you on a video tour of what's hot, what's not, and what's new.

- What's the deal with shower systems these days? Get the answers from Nigel.

Up-to-Date Data

Don't forget to check out the BUILDER 100 and Next 100 lists online. We are continually updating the data as new information arrives. You can sort by product type and location as well as see who builds what and where.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, AND NEWS FOR BUILDER ONLINE?

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FOR MORE EXCLUSIVE ONLINE CONTENT AND ADDITIONAL STORIES RELATED TO THIS ISSUE'S ARTICLES, VISIT WWW.BUILDERONLINE.COM.

ON THE COVER: JULY'S SPECIAL REPORT OUTLINES THE CHALLENGES BUILDERS WILL FACE IN ACCOMMODATING THE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN NEW-HOME BUYERS' HOME PREFERENCES. COVER PHOTO: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) KATJA HEINEMANN, MATT EICH, AND FABRIZIO COSTANTINI

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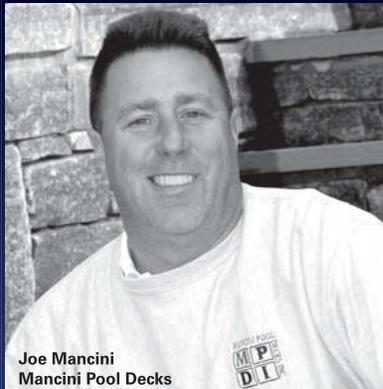
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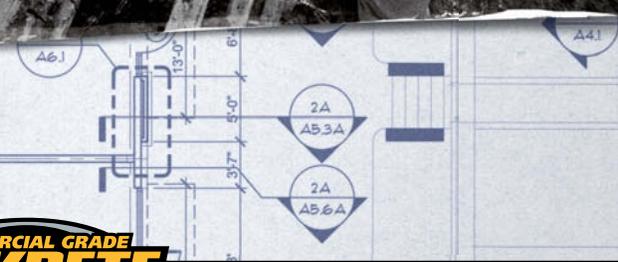
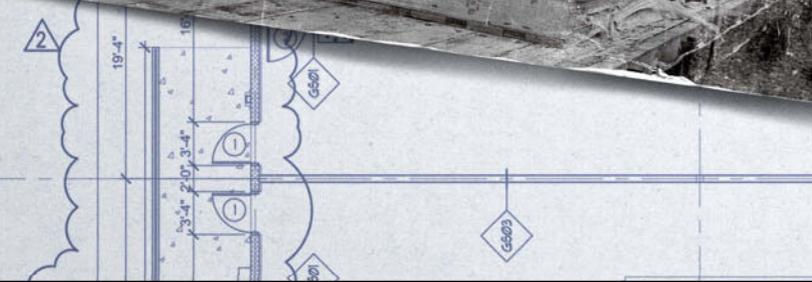
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No Time Like the Present

We can't go back in time, but we can make sure we don't make the same mistakes again.

WHILE DRIVING TO WORK ONE MORNING, I LISTENED WITH some amusement to a radio interview with an author, Robin Hemley, who recently published a book called *Do Over!* The book follows Hemley as he revisits the scenes of the biggest debacles of his youth (kindergarten, summer camp, and the prom) in order to give himself another chance to get it right.

The vignettes from his first time around are hilarious and humiliating, as are almost everyone's childhood memories if they are the slightest bit honest about them.

The do-over scenes, however, while rife with comic potential (a 48-year-old man sitting in a tiny chair, re-encountering papier-mâché; spending lots of time with 10-year-old boys; going out for a pre-prom dinner with his date ... and her husband and their eight-year-old son) don't seem so laugh-out-loud funny. But that's because they are infused with an adult perspective, with lessons learned over a lifetime's worth of mistakes and disappointments, coupled with the author's genuine desire to change his future path by rethinking how a regrettable situation in the past might have been handled differently. To his credit, the author seems to arrive at some pretty important conclusions about and for himself. Of course, that's the larger message of this book: that we can all learn from past ordeals using the perspective generated by our own experiences.

Most of us have just gone through a learning experience of the highest order, losing some combination of our savings, our businesses or our jobs, our homes, and, in general, our sense of security about the future. Could we, should we, would we have done things differently if we'd had the hindsight we have today? You bet.

The list of things home builders say they wouldn't do again is long. It includes taking advantage of easy credit, making sales to people who couldn't afford to buy, embrac-

ing short-term profits over long-term business goals, sacrificing good business practices for higher margins, and offering personal guarantees for leveraged debt.

I hope the lessons we say we've learned will stay with us for a long time. We all, buyers and sellers alike, thought we could reap great riches during the boom. We know now that making and especially keeping money is harder than it looked. There is no such thing as a sure thing, and there are no shortcuts to wealth. And ignorance of this fact is not bliss—it's expensive and painful. Sounds like the perfect time for a do-over.

We can't go back in time, but we can still learn from our mistakes. Here are a

few lessons you may soon find relevant:

Be prepared for change. If change is, as they say, the only constant in life, then why not expect it? Think through all your what ifs and how to deal with them before they happen, so you can react quickly when the need arises.

Keep your financial house in order. When financial crises occur, the need for action increases while your ability to take that action decreases.

Guard against future downturns by keeping close track of basic performance indicators such as cash flow. By all means, grow your business, but do it as much as you can by reinvesting positive cash flow, not by taking on debt. Always make sure your neck is not sticking out too far.

Find out what your customers want. When money gets tighter, people think harder about spending it. More than any other time in recent history, customers are looking for value. But keep in mind that you can't be all things to all people. Don't spend money marketing to the wrong audience.

Beware of irrational exuberance. If you jump on a bandwagon, be sure you have a cushion for when the wheels fall off. And if it happens, don't panic. Follow Rudyard Kipling's advice about keeping your head when all about you are losing theirs. Panic paralyzes and makes things much worse.

When things are going well, it's easy to become complacent, arrogant, or convinced of your own infallibility. So, lastly, don't ever believe you've learned your lesson.



Denise Dersin

DENISE DERSIN
Editor in Chief

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Not only was Kohler® rated the highest quality home generator and the most used brand in BUILDER's annual brand preference study, but they also have been selected as a Favorite 50 manufacturer by the readers of BUILDER magazine. That is quite an honor—but not a surprise.

Kohler residential generators engage quickly, automatically and dependably. For more than 80 years, Kohler has been providing total solutions for residential, commercial and industrial standby/emergency power by supplying a vast array of effective, affordable and award-winning generator products.

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Kohler residential generators offer enhanced features and better performance:

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- **Quieter Operation:** Kohler sound enclosures keep the generator operating at a noise level similar to a typical air conditioner.
- **Faster Response:** When utility power fails, Kohler residential generators restore power to the home three times faster than competitive models.

- **Larger Selection:** 8.5 – 125 kW
- **Superior Warranty:** The 8.5 through 30 kW residential generators are supported by a limited five-year warranty—one of the best in the industry.

Kohler Introduces New Builder Program

The new Kohler Home Generator Builder Program was designed to provide builders involved in either new home construction or major remodeling projects with greater opportunities to specify Kohler generator products to their customers.

- Rebates offered for every Kohler home generator installed.
- Rebates offered for every Kohler Intelligent Transfer Switch installed.
- Added value and protection to every home build.



New from Kohler: The 18 kW model was introduced this spring and offers more power in a quiet and compact package.

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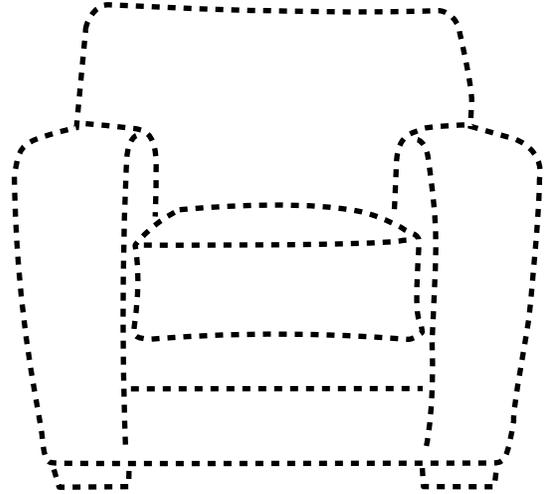
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Kudos for Second Acts

THANKS FOR THE TRULY INSPIRATIONAL article in the February issue of **BUILDER** magazine titled “Second Acts,” (page 15).

I am a builder in Baton Rouge, La., with two partners in a family home building business that started in 1956. Last year was a rough year for us and many of our subcontractors whom we consider our partners and friends.

Your article was inspirational and gave me tremendous hope.

Thanks, and I look forward to the “Second Act” or the next 50 years of our business.

CLAY S. DEVLIN

JORDAN TRADITIONS
BATON ROUGE, LA.

The Extra Mile

IN THE LAST 20 YEARS I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED in managing a residential and commercial business that has not only thrived but is currently looking at a full slate for 2009 into 2010. I’m not saying that there are no problems out there, but instead of focusing on the problems ... the [real issue] is that trust and confidence have been ripped from the market. Customers don’t trust anyone anymore. So we have been working to help our clients feel more comfortable with what is going on. Many are asking questions they have never asked before, and we are finding the answers and going more than the extra mile to help all involved feel good about the market, whether the question is about building, financing, or a dozen other areas.

We were asked the other day by a prospective client, at what point do we get too much invested into our home that we can’t recover it? My answer was, you are there now. Her response was, we have talked to other builders and you are the most honest and open. Why not, it’s not just about building, but a relationship, and by the way, we got the job. We then walked through the process and asked questions like, how long will you continue living here, do you like the area, what do you like about your existing home, and the positive outweighed the negative.

So let’s get out there, and decide that whether positive or negative, it is our choice how we react to this market.

DAVID FORCE

DESIGN & BUILD LLC
STATE COLLEGE, PA.

Modern and Green for All?

YOUR ARTICLE ON HOMETTA WAS GREAT reading [see “Hometta Will Offer Modern Homes for the Masses,” *Builder Online.com*], but have they tried to deal with a local planning department lately? The chances of them approving one of Hometta’s designs for most neighborhoods is slight. Until we can get planning and building departments to embrace the spirit of architecture, residential design (define design) will continue to be more of the same redundancy.

GEORGE RENVILLE

ARCHITECT
UPLAND, CALIF.

IHAVE SOME SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT how “sustainable” homes like these can be. As is typical with stock plans, there will probably be little concern with climate difference, site orientation, and regional construction methods. This line in the article: “incorporating features such as hydronic heating and cooling, passive ventilation, and photovoltaic systems,” is even more troubling. While passive ventilation is good in most climates, hydronic heating may be climate appropriate, hydronic cooling is not readily available nor proven, and solar PV shouldn’t even be considered until every other method for energy efficiency has been exhausted. Looks like more high-class greenwashing to me.

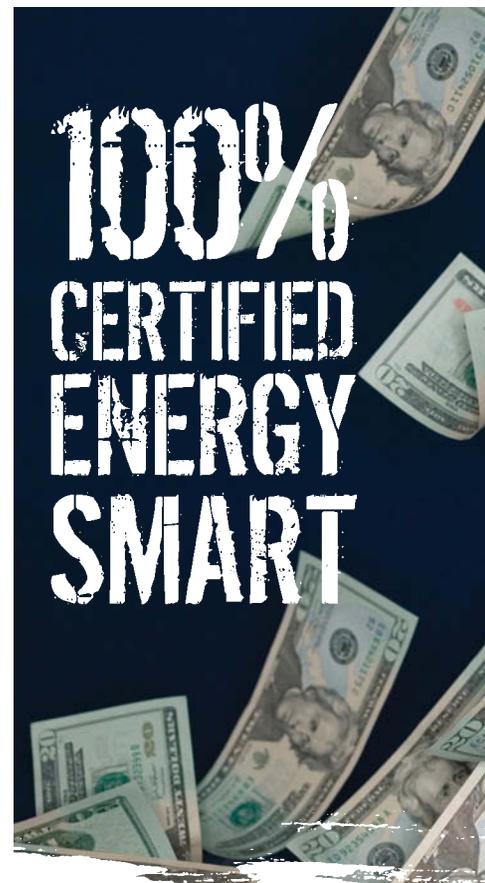
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Callback

UNFORTUNATELY, IN OUR MAY *BUILDER* Buzz (page 24), two of the builders on our list of *BUILDER* 100 companies from 2008 that had “gone out of business, liquidated, or stopped building homes” had actually done none of the above; they had merely filed for Chapter 11. We apologize to Mercedes Homes and Woodside Homes for the oversight and wish them the best in their efforts to emerge from bankruptcy protection.

DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT OR QUESTION?

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INSIDE STORY

Inside:

20 **Make It Work**

HOAs wield strong influence over their communities, so it's in builders' best interest to work with them when they want to make changes to the homes they build to meet buyer demands.

PLUS MORE >>

COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EVENTS ■ EDITED BY JOHN CAULFIELD



UNCOVERING REVENUE STREAMS

Heavy Lifting

A Houston-based auctioneer helps builders dispose of model furniture.

IN YEARS PAST, WHEN BEAZER HOMES USA closed out one of its model homes, it disposed of the model's furniture by hauling it back to a 48,000-square-foot warehouse in Atlanta. "Oh dear God, you have no idea how inefficient that was," recalls Bonnie Hale, Beazer's director of design services.

But since 2005, Beazer has liquidated its model furniture and accessories through Builders Auction Co., a Houston-based business that conducts auctions for builders in their model homes. Hale says Beazer—

which as of late May had 270 models on the ground nationwide—has been calling on Builders Auction to handle between 100 and 160 auctions per year. In each of the past two years, Builders Auction returned \$1 million to the builder, Hale confirms.

Bruce Sutter, who started Builders Auction Co. in 1996, has been an auctioneer for two decades, first for a mortgage company's brokerage that resold foreclosures in Houston in the late 1980s, and then on behalf of North Carolina-based furniture manufacturers. Back then, a lot of builders

gave away their models' furniture to employees or to charities. "They looked at it like a lost asset," he says. Now, Builders Auction does more than 400 auctions per year and counts among its clients many of the industry's largest production builders, including Meritage Homes, Centex, David Weekley Homes, Toll Brothers, and D.R. Horton.

Builders Auction is a full-service provider: It promotes the event by targeting the surrounding community, usually via door hangers. The company (see page 20)

ROY SCOTT

has 6,000 members who pay \$30 per year to receive e-mails and direct-mail notices about auctions. His company prepares a catalog that lists what's for sale and posts those items on its website. Customers pay with a credit card and haul away the stuff themselves.

The auctioneer charges buyers 15 percent over the tagged price of the item and doesn't accept returns. What it charges builders varies and includes a relatively modest marketing fee.

Most builders give Builders Auction at least two weeks' lead time after they sell a model to conduct the resale. "But we've done them with one day's notice," boasts Sutter. Hale says Builders Auction organized one auction for Beazer in three days, after an owner of a leaseback went into foreclosure "and we had to get the furniture out of there."

The quality of the products being resold is certainly a factor in an auction's success. (Sutter says that builders usually

rotate furniture through three or four models before they liquidate it.) Accessories "tend to bring in a high price," says Sutter, "sometimes retail or better." But there's little demand for "faux antiques" or "turn-of-the-century-looking stuff," and even less for entertainment centers, with the growing popularity of flat-screen TVs.

What production builders recoup through auctions can also depend on what they spent to furnish their models, which

is often guided by the house's price. Hale says that, on average, Beazer recaptures 20 percent to 25 percent of its investment in model furniture. Sutter provides this hypothetical example of return: If a builder spent \$25 per square foot to furnish a 3,000-square-foot model home, an auction might raise between \$17,000 and \$20,000, of which the builder would get around 70 percent. That's "considerably better," he says, than the \$3,000 per model one of the industry's top five builders recaptures by using a consignment house to liquidate its furniture.

Sutter estimates there are about 100,000 model homes in the U.S. He's noticed, though, that builders are opening fewer of them lately. So Builders Auction bumped up its advertising to raise its profile. Sutter is confident that "there will always be model homes," and that more builders are receptive to furniture and accessories auctions as "hidden sources of income."—*J.C.*



GOING ONCE ...: Bruce Sutter, owner of Builders Auction Co., at one of the hundreds of auctions his company conducts in builders' model homes every year.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Guard Dogs

Can homeowner associations help builders create more marketable neighborhoods?

KB HOME RECENTLY FOUND OUT that controlling HOAs doesn't always provide cover from owners' wrath when the builder wants to inject smaller houses into their communities.

At its Kenion Grove subdivision in Hillsborough, N.C., owners balked when KB began offering spartan 3,000-square-foot houses for half of what owners there had paid three years earlier. And responding to owner complaints, the Texas Residential Construction Commission initiated an investigation of KB's advertising for several communities in San Antonio, where KB wants to build lower-priced homes to meet buyer demand.

KB has been defusing these disputes by

we've had to get everyone into the process," says Vince DePorre, KB's regional president in Jacksonville, Fla.

HOA boards, whether builder- or owner-controlled, are rarely the most popular kids in town, especially when they're sending out foreclosure notices over delinquent dues or blocking the installation of solar panels. But their influence is undeniable, with roughly 60 million people living in 300,000 HOA-run communities. Two leading property managers suggest that HOAs could serve as liaisons for builders that want to alter their community's vision to meet buyer demand.

Melinda Masson, president and CEO of The Merit Cos., an Aliso Viejo, Calif.-based firm that manages more than 250

agreeing to make architectural and design changes to its new homes. "As we've made product moves over the past 18 months,

communities, doesn't believe HOAs can legally prevent a builder or developer—the "author" of the community—from building what it wants to. She also doesn't accept the proposition that smaller, more-affordable new homes necessarily diminish the value of a community's existing homes. But Masson says builders need to explain the "why" of their subdivision when they request changes. "The challenge for the builder is to keep management at the table," said Masson.

Steven Blumfield, vice president-operations of Wentworth Property Management's Lifestyles division in West Long Branch, N.J., which operates in 13 states, says well-written "declarations" that tie a subdivision's ground to the association will include square footage minimums but also leave wiggle room to make production changes in midstream. "Communication is the key. The developer's and the community's interests aren't mutually exclusive."—*J.C.*

GOT AN INSIDE STORY?

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TOP SHELF

THE LATEST AND GREATEST BUILDING PRODUCTS ■ EDITED BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

▼ Italian Convection

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◀ Saw Too

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(see page 26)

Fresh Air ▶

THE MAKER OF THE KILZ line of primers introduces Clean Start, a zero volatile organic compound water-based primer and sealer. Appropriate for interior or exterior use, the product blocks stains and tannin bleed, provides good adhesion, and improves and strengthens finish coat. It cleans up with soap and water. ■ Cost: \$21 to \$25. Masterchem Industries. 800-325-3552. www.kilz.com.

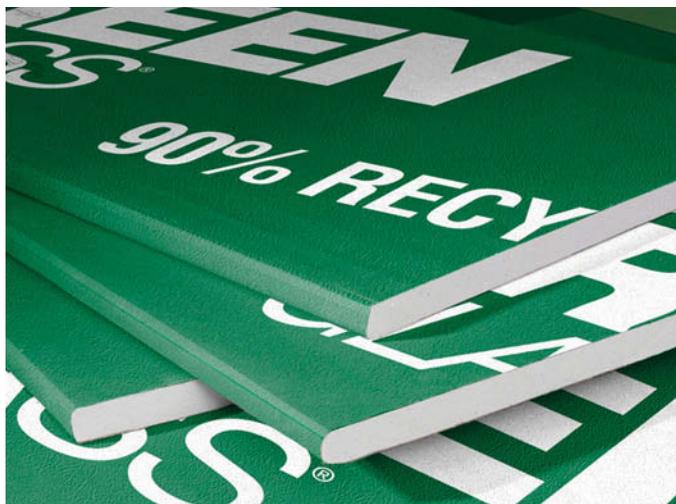


TOPSHELF



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SNOW SHEETS FALLING FROM A ROOF CAN BE DANGEROUS TO passersby, which is why snow guards can be a good idea. Most guards look utilitarian, so the manufacturer decided to add a little flair to the category with a new decorative line. Available in four shapes and 50 colors, the laser-cut products are made from stainless steel and feature a powder-coat finish. ■ Cost: \$5 to \$6. SnoBlox-Snojax. 800-766-5291. www.snoblox-snojax.com.



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PRODUCTS

PRODUCTS AND TOOLS EVERY BUILDER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ■ EDITED BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD



TALLT ALES: The manufacturer says this is the first AAMA-rated, 16-foot-tall lift/slide door on the market. Configured with up to five panels, the system features a near-flush bottom track, European hardware, removable handles, multi-point locks, and stainless steel edge pulls (for the pocketing systems). The doors are available with an aluminum exterior or a variety of interior wood species including Douglas fir, mahogany, and cherry. Weiland Sliding Doors and Windows.

■ 760-722-8828. www.weilandslidingdoors.com.

SLIDER ULE: The manufacturer's new pocket-door system allows for the storage of doors up to 10 panels inside an exterior wall cavity. Available as a manual or motorized installation, the doors can be configured in lineal, bi-parting, or 90-degree applications in heights from 6 feet 8 inches up to 10 feet. Panels can be outfitted with high-efficiency glass and are available in a variety of wood species including cherry, mahogany, or character alder or in 55 aluminum-clad exterior colors. Weather Shield Windows & Doors.

■ 800-477-6808. www.weathershield.com.



Outside Slider

Manufacturers give sliding doors a much-needed overhaul.

IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT PAST, WHEN home buyers wanted to open up their homes to the great outdoors, they opted for (yawn) traditional swinging patio doors or conventional two-panel sliding jobs. Times were simpler back then—and so were the doors.

These products worked well enough, and served as the usual method for creating an indoor/outdoor connection. But times have changed, and manufacturers are now coming up with much cooler ways to bring inside and outside together.

The game changed when door companies got hip to Australian and European hardware technology. This led to the production of folding patio doors that

have been extremely popular with builders, architects, and consumers for the dramatic way they open up a space. Now manufacturers have improved the traditional sliding door with a new generation of products.

Medford, Wis.-based Weather Shield is one of a handful of companies that offer lift/slide pocket-door systems that allow homeowners to store all door panels to one side or inside an exterior wall cavity.

“The pocket-door system expands Weather Shield’s extensive patio-door line to give homeowners a new option for blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor living spaces,” says Jeff Williams, the company’s corporate manager (see page 30)

TRACKO NE: No need for bulky bottom-rail systems with the VSW65 Single Track Slider. The wood-framed, sliding-door system allows individual panels to slide out of the way to create large openings. The system can be configured with a maximum individual panel width of 4 feet and a maximum height of 9 feet 10 inches and can be stored in a choice of four parking bays or a pocket closet. It comes in wood or aluminum cladding with multi-point locking hardware. NanaWall Systems.

■ 800-873-5673. www.nanawall.com.



UPlink

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PRODUCTS

of marketing and communications. “The choice of wood species, exterior colors, and decorative options create a stunning door that enhances a home’s interior and exterior design when it’s closed. When it’s open, it’s completely hidden, enabling unrestricted views and movement inside to out.”

Unlike traditional sliding doors, Weather Shield’s system uses an interlocking mechanism that couples panels together so the entire setup opens and closes on stainless steel rollers by pulling the lead panel.

NanaWall Systems, the Mill Valley, Calif., company that helped make folding accordion doors popular in this country, has taken things even further by introducing an ingenious single-track sliding door system whose clean, slim profile is sure to make architects happy. The wood-frame product uses individual panels that glide on a single track to create large openings.

“The VSW65 Single Track Slider is the result of three years of research by NanaWall and Solarlux engineers in the U.S. and Germany,” says Ebrahim Nana, president of NanaWall Systems. “Architects liked the concept in NanaWall’s earlier, smaller-sized slider system and asked us for larger-sized panels. We developed the VSW65 Single Track Slider to meet demand for architects’ design concepts for the luxury market.”

Architects appear to approve. “With the unique capabilities of the NanaWall, including zero-clearance thresholds, the opening glass walls are the solution for seamless integration of craftsmanship and lifestyle,” says Vail, Colo.-based architect Christy D’Agostino, who recently used the single-track slider in a Colorado mountain residence. “Throughout the day and night when the NanaWalls are open, family and friends gather inside or outside to hear the calming waters over the glacier granite rocks while taking in breath-taking panoramic views of the Rocky Mountains.”

It’s not enough that sliders are way cooler than they used to be and offer more configurations—including corner applications; they also can be produced in much bigger sizes, too.

Warroad, Minn.-based Marvin Win-



WIDES PAN: Part of the manufacturer’s Ultra Series, TerraSpan is a lift-and-slide door that allows homeowners to create a seamless transition between indoors and out. The doors can be configured with up to 10 panels per unit with a maximum panel height of 12 feet. Available in a broad array of aluminum-clad exteriors and sustainably harvested wood, the doors are available with three bottom-rail choices and 900 operational configurations. Kolbe & Kolbe Millwork Co. ■ 800-955-8177. www.kolbe-kolbe.com.

dows and Doors recently introduced a 12-foot-tall, lift-and-slide door—its biggest ever—that can be stacked or recessed into a pocket.

But Oceanside, Calif.-based Weiland Sliding Doors and Windows saw Marvin’s 12-footer and raised it to 16 feet. And to top things off, the five-panel door system also can be recessed into an exterior wall for good measure.

“The 16-foot-tall system is a natural extension of the efforts the company has made to maintain a position as the leader in the high-end custom door and window market for the last 20 years,” the firm says in a statement announcing the door.

But why are manufacturers focusing on sliding doors and why now? John Kirchner, Marvin’s public relations manager, has an explanation: It’s an extension of the trend toward the melding of the inside and outside living spaces, he says.

“The need this door is filling is very similar,” Kirchner explains. “The door basically allows the homeowner to open up an entire wall of their home to the outside. It’s more than just a door in the sense that we think about a typical patio door; it is as much of a glass wall that can be entirely opened.

“The other need this door is filling,” Kirchner continues, “is the need to be able to hide the doors in a pocket application or at a minimum stack the doors in a way that removes them from your view and maximizes the available opening to provide a smooth and unobstructed transition between inside and out.” ■



LIFT 'EM UP: The Ultimate Lift and Slide door is the manufacturer’s largest ever. Available with up to eight panels in bi-parting configurations or four panels when operation is uni-directional, the system’s maximum panel size is 6 feet wide by 12 feet tall. It’s available in 19 clad colors, five wood species, three hardware finishes, and two configurations: with door panels stacked together to create the illusion of only one panel or hidden in an exterior wall opening. Marvin Windows and Doors. ■ 888-537-7828. www.marvin.com.

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DIGITAL HOME

SMART TECHNOLOGY FOR NEW HOMES ■ EDITED BY DAN DALEY

W H O L E - H O U S E A U D I O

Surround Sound

Wireless wants to be your friend.

THE NOTION OF WIRELESS WHOLE-HOUSE audio was not exactly embraced by either home builders or their subcontracted systems integrators early on. To someone for whom wire is a fundamental item on any P.O., anything that did away with cabling was a profit-taker, not a profit-maker.

But it is an increasingly wireless world, and builders and integrators are beginning to discover that presented properly, wireless whole-house audio has profits of its own to be made.

How good the market has become for wireless whole-house audio is reflected in the increased competition in the sector. In addition to Sonos, Logitech, and NuVo, Cisco's Linksys brand entered the high-end market earlier this year. However, wireless is a broad playing field, and the iPhone is eating into the sales of the profitable \$400 to \$500 remote controls on the market. On the other hand, wireless audio systems makers have also found that iPhones introduce new buyers to the whole-house audio concept.

The builder channel prompted a recent design

addition for Logitech's Squeezebox and Transporter networked whole-house music system. Later this year the company will introduce in-wall-mounting kits for its speakers and controllers intended for installation by low-voltage specialists. "That came about in large part from feedback from builders," says Logitech product marketing director Sam Feng.

Noting the company is developing a builder sales channel—it has shown at CEDIA for four years and may attend the International Builders' Show in 2010—Feng says that the Transporter system can be installed either as a wired or wireless system and can work in a hybrid of both modes. "The size of houses is changing and while wireless systems are a good choice up to a certain size, after that some homes may need systems that run on structured wiring," he explains. "That's a good way for builders to present it to buyers, too."—D.D.



UNWIRED: The Sonos wireless multiroom music system is a convenient and cost-effective package.

A U D I O D E S I G N

Home Theater Roadmap

Builders benefit from consistency and standardization of speaker placement.

MUSIC, MUSIC EVERYWHERE but where to put the speakers? Builders, architects, and systems integrators often come to loggerheads about where to place speakers for home theaters and whole-house audio. Common ground can now be found in a document developed jointly between the CEA and CEDIA.

The "CEA/CEDIA-CEB22: Home Theater Recommended

Practice: Audio Design Bulletin" provides a baseline for the design and installation of high-performance home theater or multi-channel music playback in residential spaces. While the focus of the bulletin is home theater audio design, many of the practices are applicable to multi-purpose, two-channel audio systems, as well. Following this bulletin will allow Electronic Systems Contractors (ESC) to deliver full perfor-

mance for the equipment and the space they're in.

"CEB 22 is a model recommended practice enabling ESCs to design a home theater for maximum performance," says Dave Pedigo, CEDIA senior director of technology, who added that this document is the first in a series of bulletins regarding high-performance home theater design. "The creation of these documents will ultimately foster better theater design throughout the industry and help builders more effectively implement audio systems that will help them sell new homes."

For more information about CEA Technology and Standards, visit www.CE.org/standards.—D.D.

Fly on the Wall

Russound's new MDK-C5 Multiline Display Keypad control interface features a multiline LCD screen display, a sys-



tem clock, zone alarms, a sleep timer, and paging. The MDK-C5 fits in a standard 2-gang workbox and connects to the MCA-C5 through a single CAT-5 cable. \$349.99. For more information, visit www.russound.com.

Affordable Control

Lutron's new RadioRa-SR is a single-room version of the RadioRa wireless lighting control system that integrates with Lutron shades and third-party control systems. The SR system with three SR-compatible devices (dimmer, keypad, sensor, motorized shades, etc.) costs about \$850. For more information, visit www.lutron.com/radiorasr.



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AR83009

NAHB BRIEFS

Upfront Relief

First-time home buyers who would qualify for the \$8,000 tax credit, but don't have the money for a down payment or closing fees, may now be able to get a loan to help cover those upfront costs.

HUD announced that the FHA will allow state housing finance agencies to provide second mortgages "monetizing" the tax credit so that borrowers can use the funds toward their down



payments and closing costs for the purchase of homes with FHA-insured mortgage loans.

"This is great news for thousands of families who want to take advantage of today's low interest rates and competitive prices ... but could not save enough money for a down payment and closing costs," says Joe Robson, NAHB chairman.

Right Approach

In testimony before Congress, the NAHB praised H.R. 2336, the GREEN Act of 2009, which sets new green building and sustainability benchmarks for properties that get financial help from HUD. ▶

NATIONAL BEAT

NEWS FROM HOUSING'S GROUND ZERO ■ EDITED BY DEBORAH LEOPOLD



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Going Green

The NAHB is leading the way towards green building.

IN OUR LINE OF WORK, A "SURE THING" IS RARE, especially given today's difficult market. But I can confidently predict one "sure thing" about housing: The future is green.

The past few years have seen a surge of interest in green building among buyers and builders and I'm proud to say that the NAHB is helping to lead the way. Our National Green Building Program offers resources and tools to help builders, remodelers, HBAs, and homeowners learn how to build green and the many benefits of doing so.

A major component of the NAHB's

National Green Building Program is the ICC-700-2008 National Green Building Standard. Approved by ANSI early this year, it is the first consensus-driven, nationally recognizable standard definition for residential green building. The Standard provides the flexibility necessary to accommodate regionally appropriate best green practices and includes four scoring levels: bronze, silver, gold, and emerald.

Not all builders choose the standard, however. Some are scoring their homes to the NAHB Model Green Home Building Guidelines. These (see page 36)



JOE ROBSON
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
NAHB
WASHINGTON, D.C.

flexible, voluntary measures for single-family home construction cover lot design, preparation, and development; resource, energy, and water efficiency; indoor environmental quality; and operation, maintenance, and homeowner education. Homes built in compliance with the Guidelines can be certified at three levels: bronze, silver, or gold.

To help builders determine if their products make the green grade, the NAHB has created an online scoring tool that can be used with either the Guidelines or the Standard when builders seek to have their homes and development projects certified as being “green.” Builders can also use the scoring tool to qualify their homes in the U.S. Department of Energy’s Builders Challenge program.

The NAHB Research Center serves as a third-party certifying body for National Green Building Certification under the Guidelines and the Standard. Its green-certified mark means a project has been inspected at least twice by an independent, third-party verifier to confirm that every green point claimed in the design has been included and is installed correctly.

THE NAHB RESEARCH CENTER CORNER

New Jewel in Crown

*NAHBRC certifies first Emerald-level,
green single-family new home.*

ON EARTH DAY, APRIL 22, the NAHB Research Center issued the first Emerald-level green home certificate under its National Green Building Certification. Emerald is the highest and most stringent level of certification a home can achieve when scored to the National Green Building Standard rating system.

Builder Robert G. Brown of RGB Custom Homes achieved the top level by building a very green, 1,900-square-foot home in East Stroudsburg, Pa., that scored 724 points based on the Standard, well above the 697 minimum points required to achieve Emerald.

While known for building larger custom homes, Brown

says his company had seen a growing demand for smaller, more-efficient homes in its market. Beyond his typical building techniques and products, there were a few new selections he incorporated into this home, including the ultra-low-flow 1.28 gpf toilets (required for Emerald-level certification), geothermal heating system, and energy recovery ventilation system. Brown notes that he never paid much attention to landscaping on the homes he built previously, but with this home he paid a lot of attention to all aspects of the home siting and landscaping to minimize slope disturbance, protect natural resources, and preserve wildlife habitats in the area. Ultimately,

In addition to providing clear, bona fide criteria for green building, both the Guidelines and the Standard are flexible and allow builders to select which measures and certification levels work best for their specific product, location, and buyers. This is particularly important in an environment where prescriptive measures are increasingly common and can add thousands of dollars to the cost of a new home.

Another of the NAHB’s important initiatives is the Certified Green Professional (CGP) designation. It was introduced at the 2008 International Builders’ Show (IBS) with the goal of having 500 CGPs by the end of the year. The program has far exceeded that initial goal, and to date, more than 3,100 people have earned the CGP designation.

Details about all of these NAHB offerings—and much more—are available online at www.NAHBgreen.org. Please take a look and determine how you can incorporate green principles into your business. The future of home building is definitely green, and the NAHB is leading the way with the products and services that will help home builders make the nation’s new homes greener than ever before. **B**

it was the combination of a number of green practices and products that helped capture the top certification level.

Brown says while there was a decent learning curve for both his company and his trades, he thinks they could now easily replicate the process for future green homes thanks in part to the available resources such as the Green Scoring Tool available on www.NAHBGreen.org. He also says the stringent third-party verification process the company went through with accredited verifier Frank Malpere really helped everyone on the jobsite understand the reasons behind the green practices. Having Malpere visually inspect and/or test every point claimed by the builder was a real eye-opener and an education for the construction team.

Malpere advises other builders seeking certification for their homes to create a partnership with an accredited verifier right from the start.

NAHB BRIEFS

But NAHB President Jerry Howard also warned members that H.R. 2454, the other major piece of climate change legislation now before Congress, includes requirements that conflict with H.R.2336—making the GREEN Act obsolete before it’s even signed.



“I am hopeful that this subcommittee will be able to restore the balance necessary to truly incentivize green building and preserve affordability as the debate over climate change continues,” Howard says.

Mature Market

Builders of single-family homes for mature buyers reported an increase in traffic during the first quarter of this year, according to the NAHB’s 55+ Housing Market Index. Despite difficult market conditions, builders who specialize in this sector are seeing more prospective buyers coming through their doors according to the data. Builders exhibited guarded optimism as they look forward six months. See this quarter’s data at: www.nahb.org/fileUpload_details.aspx?ContentID=117817.



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Shaping Up

Credit will influence the housing recovery in several ways.

HOME SALES APPARENTLY SCRATCHED OUT A CYCLICAL BOTTOM in the early months of this year, and the NAHB expects improvements in home sales and housing production to evolve over the balance of this year and in 2010.

A housing recovery cannot be put together, of course, unless financing for home buyers and home builders is available at rates and

terms that work. Recent surveys conducted by the Federal Reserve and by the NAHB document financing challenges still being faced by buyers and builders. These challenges need not prevent near-term housing recovery, but they will influence its shape as well as the types of homes produced and perhaps the types of companies doing the production.

FED SURVEY

The Federal Reserve's most recent "Senior Loan Officer Opinion Survey on Bank Lending Practices" contained some troublesome news for both home buyers and builders.

On the buyer side, there was no letup in the tightening of credit standards on home mortgages. Very few banks were offering subprime loans and nearly two-thirds continued to tighten standards on "nontraditional" loans. Half the banks continued to tighten standards on prime home mortgage loans and no banks eased their standards.

With respect to commercial real estate lending, a category that includes residential construction and land development loans, the Fed survey revealed serious tightening of lending standards for the 14th consecutive quarter. Indeed, two-thirds of banks tightened standards in this area during the first quarter of this year, and no banks eased their standards.

The Fed's survey contained special questions on the outlook for the quality of existing loans over the balance of the year, under the assumption that economic activity pro-

gresses in line with consensus forecasts. Overwhelming majorities of banks said that loan quality is likely to decline for all major loan types; 82 percent of banks expected further deterioration for prime residential mortgages, and 90 percent expected quality to continue to decline for commercial real estate loans. From this perspective, it's no wonder that banks are toughening standards on prospective new loans!

NAHB SURVEY

The NAHB's first-quarter survey of builders regarding conditions in the AD&C credit markets showed extensions of patterns identified in a series of similar surveys

conducted during the past two years.

Depository institutions (banks and thrifts) continue to be the dominant source of AD&C credit for the home building industry, particularly for smaller companies, and we continue to find progressive tightening of lending terms and standards for both outstanding credit and prospective new loans.

We asked builders about reasons given by lenders for clamping down on new or outstanding AD&C loans. We heard most about mandates from regulators, demands by boards of directors, regulatory or accounting rules, and lender concerns about loan performance. The downbeat expectations for loan quality revealed by the Fed's survey of bankers suggest that the tightening of AD&C credit conditions still has some distance to run.

IMPLICATIONS FOR 2009-2010

The evolution of housing credit conditions has a number of implications for the near-term outlook, including:

- The home mortgage market will be heavily dominated by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and FHA.

- Mortgage finance constraints will compress affordable price ranges and encourage scaling back of new-home sizes and amenities.

- The early stages of recovery in housing production will favor builders that don't have to rely on depository institutions for AD&C credit.

- Tightness of supply at depository institutions will limit the strength of the recovery in housing production through 2010.



DAVID CROWE
Chief Economist
NAHB

Washington, D.C.
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WHEN IT COMES TO COMPACT equipment, structural builders recognize one name as the leader. Bobcat Company has been manufacturing loaders for more than 50 years. Builders have watched as Bobcat has continuously improved product design, bringing more operator comfort and machine durability to the jobsite, which reduces operating costs and increases productivity. This tradition continues with the new M-Series loaders, which have many new features that increase performance and provide the operator with more comfort. For example, sound levels from M-Series loaders have been decreased by over 60 percent from previous models.

Without even getting in the machine, it's easy to see how M-Series loaders differ from previous models. The unique cab-forward design not only gives the loaders a new look, it moves the operator closer to the attachment and provides a better view of the surrounding work area. Bobcat provides unmatched visibility with the largest cab door available on the market, as well as large windows on the sides, rear and top of the cab. The size of

the cab has increased and the interior has been redesigned to provide operators with a more comfortable working environment.

Bobcat® M-Series loaders have a best-in-class pressurized cab, with a new one-piece pressure seal that goes all the way around the door to keep dirt and dust outside, compressing into a specialized, curved door pocket.

Equally important to operator comfort is the ability of the loader to be productive, and Bobcat has increased the hydraulic system standard flow by 18 percent to give more power to your attachments. A new, removable hydraulic hose guide makes changing attachments easier and faster, while keeping the hoses routed correctly.

Performance enhancements include more tractive effort for exceptional pushing and digging power, holes for frame-mounted counterweights that increase lifting performance and a loader that works longer between fueling.

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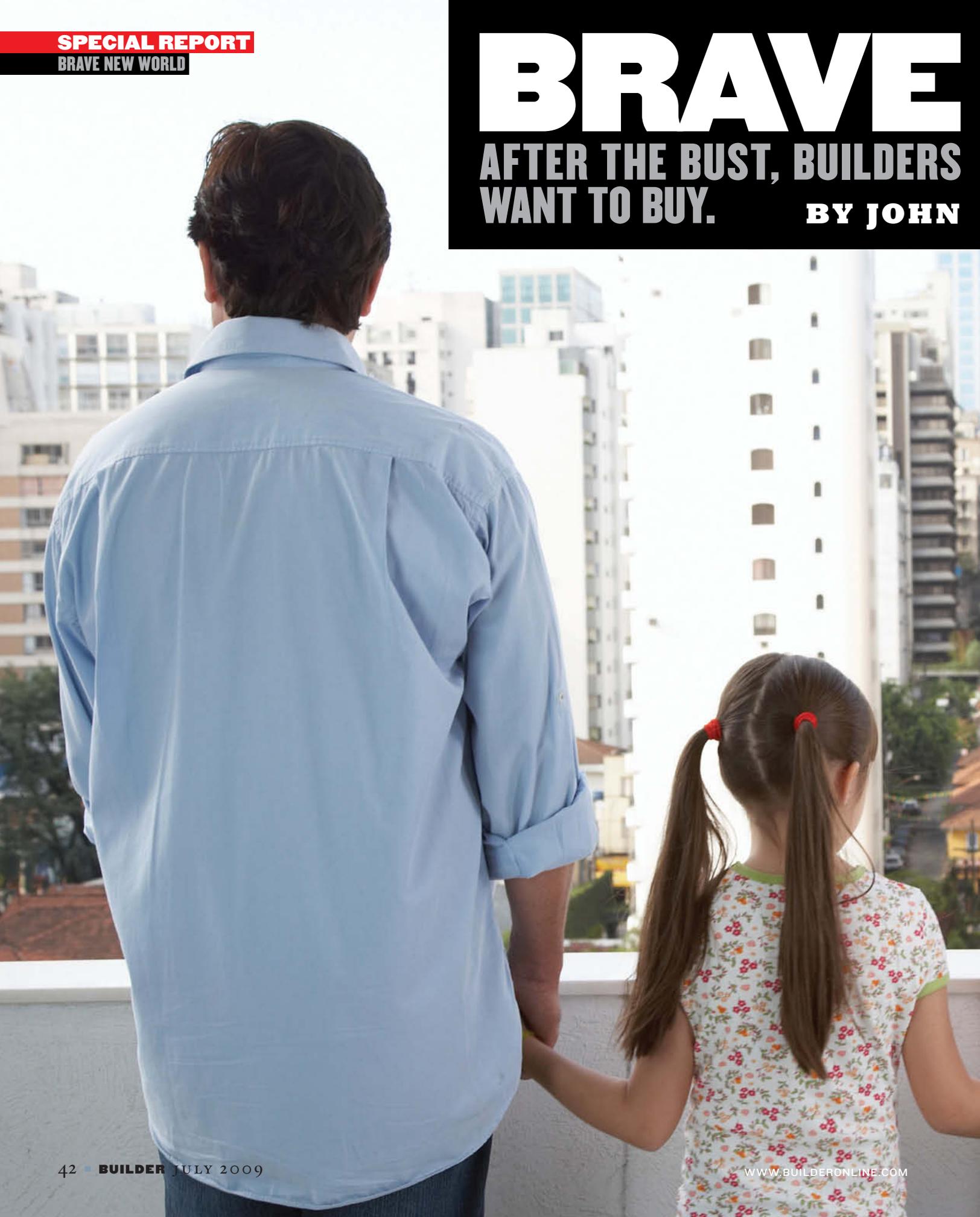
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SPECIAL REPORT

BRAVE NEW WORLD

BRAVE

**AFTER THE BUST, BUILDERS
WANT TO BUY. BY JOHN**



NEW WORLD

MIGHT BE SURPRISED AT WHAT FUTURE SHOPPERS WILL

CAULFIELD, JENNY SULLIVAN, AND NIGEL F. MAYNARD



THE HOMES THAT SOLD like gangbusters during the good times—to the tune of nearly 1.4 million in 2005 alone—are not what the buyers of tomorrow say they are looking for.

That is the unsettling conclusion **BUILDER** drew from our recent “**BUILDER/American Lives New-Home Shopper Survey**” as well as interviews with buyers in the three groups—immigrants, Baby Boomers, and Millennials—that are likely to drive most of the demand within the housing industry for the foreseeable future.

This Special Report outlines the real and daunting challenges that lie ahead for home building companies that must try to accommodate several buyer segments with a tapestry of preferences that, in the past, builders might have deemed incompatible with their business models.

Immigrants, 40 million strong and counting, still see their American Dream in a big house with enough space for their extended and visiting families. Boomers approaching retirement are still inclined to downsize, but without sacrificing quality or comfort. However, their buying decisions now often reflect serious concessions to financial and health events many hadn't anticipated or chose not to think about.

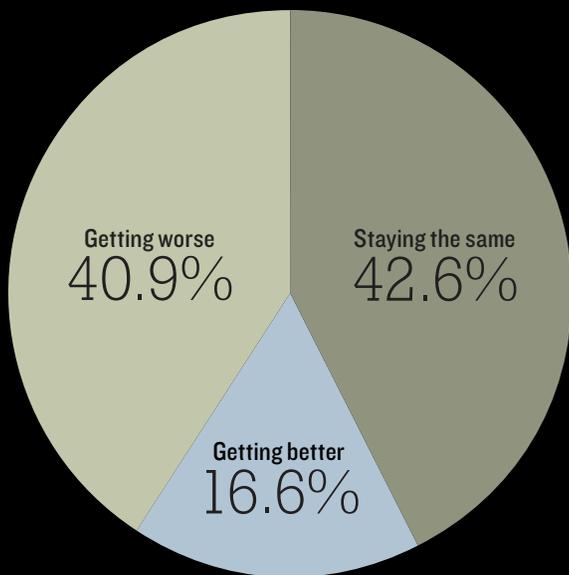
And Millennials—the generation born between the late 1970s and early 1990s—are buying earlier than their predecessors and are looking for urban (or at least higher density), affordable, well-designed, and uncluttered dwellings that complement their lifestyles.

It's becoming clear that builders' old, one-size-fits-all marketing and product approach won't work on any of these buyer groups whose interests and borrowing requirements differ widely, not only from the buyers of the recent past, but also from each other.—*J.C.*

NOSSA PRODUCTIONS

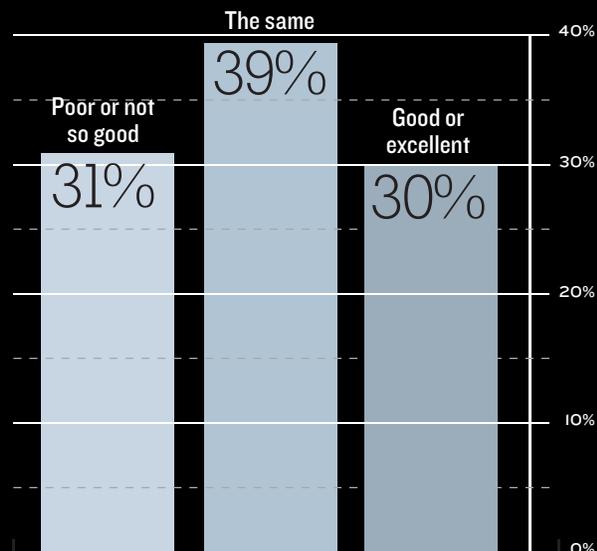
Shoppers Are Still Concerned About the Economy ...

(% WHO THINK ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ARE:)



... and Some Are Financially Shaky ...

(% WHOSE PERSONAL FINANCES ARE:)



BETTER DAYS AHEAD:

Contrary to what some builders have been saying, many shoppers aren't waiting for market pricing to bottom out and are confident that the economy will turn around within the year.

BASED ON 435 RESPONSES

A SIMPLER PLAN

BUYING THE BIGGEST, FLASHIEST HOUSE IS LESS OF A PRIORITY FOR NEW SHOPPERS. BY JOHN CAULFIELD

AN UNPRECEDENTED HOUSING BUST, which brought about the largest loss of home equity in history, has fostered fundamental attitudinal changes in new-home prospects.

These customers say that while the recession presents them with opportunities to get more house for their money, fewer are willing to spend beyond their means. The economic downturn also seems to be converting potential home buyers into homebodies; many say their lifestyles now revolve around spending more time with family.

They also contend that the quality of a community is at least as important to their buying decisions as the house within it or any of its "bells and whistles." And at no time in the history of this country has consumer demand been as fervent for energy-efficient homes, not only to protect the environment but also to save money for their owners. The desire for a McMansion

seems to have been supplanted by the desire for a more responsible home.

These are some of the main findings from our May 2009 "BUILDER/American Lives New-Home Shopper Survey" conducted for BUILDER by American Lives (<http://americanlives.com>), a Carmel, Calif.-based market research firm, which polled more than 600 shoppers in eight states. The survey provides an intriguing snapshot of the changing perceptions of buyers about their homes and a glimpse at how builders need to rethink both their homes and their marketing to meet the new demands.

BACK TO THE COCOON

What jumps out from the results is these customers weren't just window shopping. Despite a still-fragile economy and trepidation about their employment, nearly three-fifths of the respondents said they thought

it was an "okay," "good," or "excellent" time to buy a house.

While they concede there are still risks to purchasing a house, relatively few respondents—around 30 percent—are afraid to make a commitment to buy. Contrary to what economists and some builders continue to believe, only one in five respondents is waiting for the market to bottom out before buying; nearly three-fifths of the respondents said they're back in the market because they are convinced they can get more house for their money now.

However, given that prices are still dropping in many areas of the country, these shoppers are definitely being more cautious. More than 36 percent said adamantly they wouldn't stretch their budgets to get a good deal on a house. That makes sense, given that three-quarters of those surveyed are reining in their spending in general.

There will always be new-home buyers

... but That's Not Stopping Them From Jumping Back Into the Housing Market

(% WHO THINK BUYING A HOUSE NOW IS:)



SOURCE: 2009 BUILDER/AMERICAN LIVES NEW-HOME SHOPPER SURVEY

interested in only two things: size and price. That trend is certainly evident among the survey's respondents, although a good number of shoppers have competing priorities this time around. One is to find a house that "fits their needs." This was "very true" or "exactly how I feel" for more than 70 percent of respondents who identified themselves as first-time buyers.

Another priority is buying in the right neighborhood. Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed "somewhat" or "strongly" with the suggestion that "community is just as important as the home." More than half were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice; they'd be willing to accept a smaller house "in the neighborhood I want."

This communal instinct extends to the home as well; more shoppers view it as a refuge. More than two-thirds, for instance, said they are going out less, and nearly 80 percent feel that spending more time with their families "has become more important to me." Floor plans conducive to family time and at-home entertaining will undoubtedly resonate with these buyers.

SAVING MONEY AND THE EARTH

Since the survey polled customers looking at new homes, it's not surprising that half the respondents said they would prefer to buy a newly built home. But shoppers don't seem as locked into that desire as buyers of the past have been. Nearly three-fifths of the respondents—and more than 70 percent of shoppers in their 20s and 30s—said they were looking at both new and existing houses, understandable considering some of the deals on existing homes.

However, many shoppers still perceive a new house as a better bargain, partly because they believe it will be more energy efficient than an older house. And if this survey does anything, it shows how the relationship between environmental protection and the costs of running a house is emerging as a seminal factor when shoppers select one house over another.

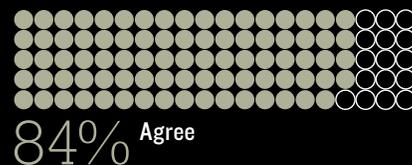
While they may not be sure about how their homes affect the planet's ecological balance, shoppers are dead certain that changes in how the nation as a whole is living are in order. All but 5 percent of those polled agreed, to a greater or lesser degree, with the statement "we will destroy the environment if we continue living the way we do."

Anywhere from 80 percent to 95 percent of respondents now see energy-saving HVAC systems, windows, lighting, and water fixtures as "very important" or "essential" to their homes. There are limits, though, to how green shoppers want to be. More than 70 percent may agree that solar panels are important, but fewer than one in three is willing to see his or her mortgage payments rise by \$150 to \$200 per month to defray the \$20,000 to \$30,000 installation cost.

More than half of those polled said they'd be willing to pay between \$2,000 and \$5,000 more to include an energy-saving feature in their new home, as long as they could recoup the cost over time, preferably within two years. (Just under 20 percent said they'd shell out up to \$10,000 per feature.) But if the returns aren't there, shoppers become decidedly less eco-friendly: Nearly one-quarter said they wouldn't pay extra if they couldn't recoup the cost, and about the same percentage said they'd only spend up to \$1,000 or \$2,000.

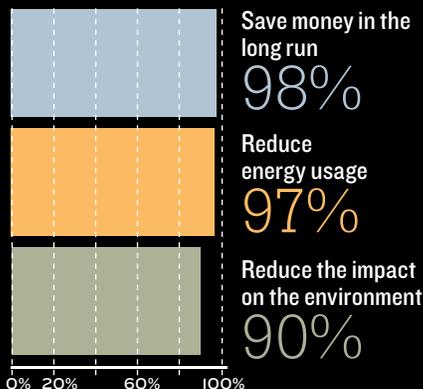
RESPONSIBLER OI: Buyers seeking energy efficiency seem to be focusing on windows, HVAC systems, and water-conserving products. Some say they'd spend up to \$10,000 extra for an energy-saving house if the payback is quick.

More Consumers Say Life-styles Must Change to Protect the Environment ...

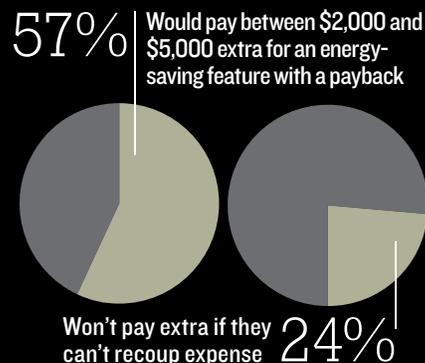


... many Are Considering Homes With Energy Star-Rated Products That Promise to ...

(% WHO AGREE)



... but Any Eco-Investment Must Show a Return



BASED ON 342 RESPONSES

SOURCE: 2009 BUILDER/AMERICAN LIVES NEW-HOME SHOPPER SURVEY



VISIT WWW.BUILDERONLINE.COM/BRAVE-NEW-WORLD/ TO VIEW THE COMPLETE BUILDER/AMERICAN LIVES NEW-HOME SHOPPER SURVEY.

SPECIAL REPORT
BRAVE NEW WORLD

FINALLY ARRIVED: Cambodian-American Tooch Van, wife Chorvy, and son Winston, outside the Lowell, Mass., home they bought with help from a local housing group.





NEW ARRIVALS TO AMERICA'S SHORES MAY HAVE FINANCIAL and cultural challenges that earlier immigrants couldn't have imagined. But today's foreign-born residents are retelling the same story as the waves of immigrants who preceded them did about their quest for a better life, freedom, and prosperity, all of which continue to be measured, in part, by owning a home.

For Pranav Bhatt, homeownership is a matter of size and distance: He's looking for a four-bedroom house that's within 20 miles of his workplace at Siemens in Princeton, N.J., where he's a software developer. Arney Mendez, a finance manager for a Ford dealership in Miami, recalls that his one "must have" for the home he bought last year was either a swimming pool or proximity to a lake. Mendez's ultimate goal is to live by the ocean, and when asked if that dream is attainable, he responds, "Of course," and then adds with a laugh, "I play [the lottery] every Saturday and Wednesday."

60s—are among the nearly 40 million foreign born living here, about 54 percent of whom arrived from Latin American countries, according to the latest Census estimates. Through the 2000s, immigrants accounted for 29 percent of the household growth in the U.S., versus 19 percent in the 1990s and 10 percent in the 1980s, according to Dowell Myers, a professor of urban planning and demography at the University of Southern California. Myers notes that more than half of all Latino immigrants in the Golden State own homes.

Latinos are not alone in their pursuit of the American dream. "The desire for own-

DREAMING IN COLOR

BUILDERS AND IMMIGRANTS BOTH SEE THEIR FUTURE IN HOMEOWNERSHIP. BUT THEY DON'T ALWAYS SEE IT THE SAME WAY.

BY JOHN CAULFIELD



The road to ownership for foreign-born buyers has its bumps, as Ana Lopez found out when she lost her job as a cost analyst for Aecom this spring, only eight months after she bought a 3,115-square-foot, two-family house for \$196,000 in Lowell, Mass., with \$8,000 in down-payment assistance through a local nonprofit housing group. (See "Helping Hand," at www.builderonline.com/brave-new-world/.) Luckily for Lopez she's collecting \$750 in monthly rent from her brother Junior, who lives with his wife and two children on the first floor. Nanta Buranakanchana, a jewelry store owner in Chicago, has owned several homes since coming to America in 1969. But practice doesn't always make perfect, and in May she was trying to unload five investment condos she bought three years earlier.

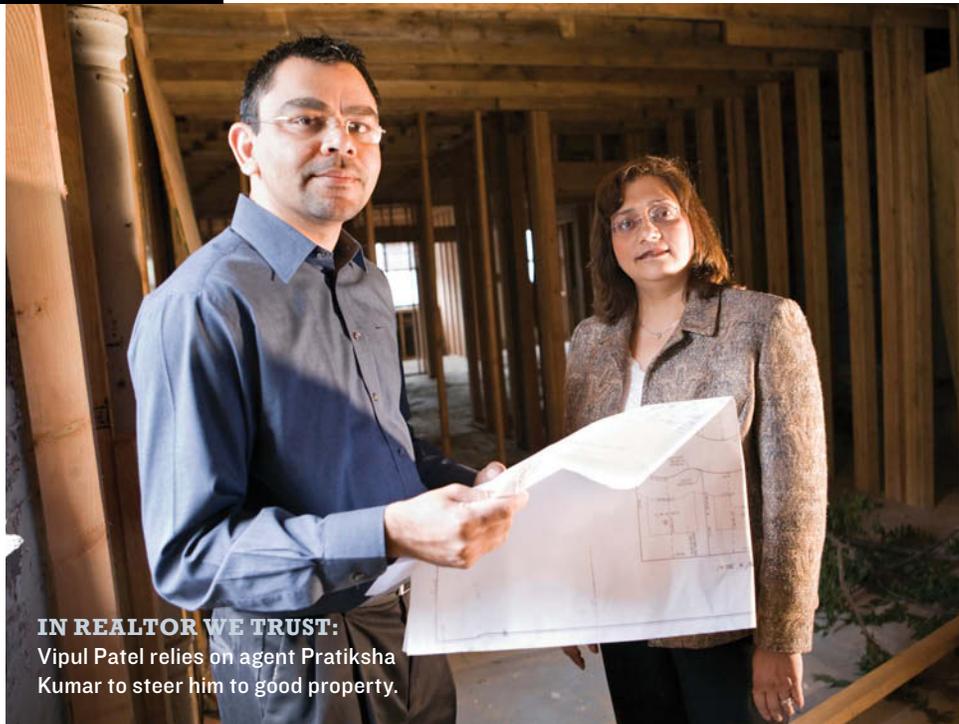
These buyers—who emigrated to the U.S. from, respectively, India, Cuba, the Dominion Republic, and Thailand, and whose ages range from early 30s to mid

ership is profound in the Asian community," says Jim Park, president of the San Diego-based Asian Real Estate Association of America, which represents 10,000 Realtors in 38 states. "Homeownership is a priority for Cubans," adds Rei Mesa, president of Prudential Florida Realty in Miami, who oversees 52 sales offices.

Many builders peg their future growth on what once looked like an endlessly expanding immigrant population, and with good reason: Data released this April by the Pew Hispanic Center confirm that homeownership rates for both legal and undocumented immigrants rise after they've been here more than a decade (see "Sticking Around," www.builderonline.com/brave-new-world/).

But as the recent economic crisis has closed off job opportunities, this immigrant wave is ebbing. Between 2007 and 2008, only 1.15 million newcomers from other countries arrived, the *(see page 48)*

MATT THURMAN



IN REALTOR WE TRUST:

Vipul Patel relies on agent Pratiksha Kumar to steer him to good property.

lowest government-recorded number in 13 years. Citing data from Mexico's government, *The New York Times* reported in May that for the year ended in August 2008, 226,000 fewer Mexicans emigrated to other countries, a 25 percent decline from the previous year. Historically, the vast majority of emigrating Mexicans go to the U.S. "There is no question the downturn has muted the growth of foreign-born households," says Nic Retsinas, director of the Joint Center for Housing Studies in Cambridge, Mass.

Even so, Retsinas believes immigrant buyers will be a force in the housing market for decades to come. But builders that don't maintain a fresh perspective about what kinds of homes these buyers want, how they pay for them, and who they trust in making those decisions (Hint: It's their real estate agent), run the risk of devising sales and marketing strategies that miss their targets. "An absolute, complete knowledge [of immigrant buyers] isn't just nice anymore; it's critical," says Bob Schultz of New Home Sales Specialists in Boca Raton, Fla.

FAMILY, REDEFINED

About 18 months ago, Oklahoma-based Ideal Homes wanted to generate more sales from local Hispanic buyers. It set out to do customer profiles based on the 20,000 prospects who visited its models and those who bought a house. What Ideal discovered, says director of marketing Steve Shoemaker, is

"we are actually very appealing to an Asian buyer." Ideal gets about 35 percent of its business from referrals and 33 percent from real estate agents, both of which are reliable avenues to Asian prospects. Ideal's ads "play up the family angle," which resonates with immigrants in general and Asians in particular. And the builder's energy-efficient homes offer "a value message" to immigrant buyers.

While by no means monolithic, immigrant buyer groups do share characteristics that builders can latch onto. Foremost is the centrality of family and how that affects what homes they will consider buying.

Phil Jones, the broker/owner of Coldwell Banker Coastal Alliance, points to one client, an Egypt-born oil executive, who is renting a \$2.5 million house in Long Beach, Calif., for four months. Despite his wealth, the executive may not be the decision-maker. "His children, wife, and father will decide whether they want to buy it," says Jones, a sign of the importance of families. Michael Lee, president of the multicultural marketing and sales training firm Ethno-Connect, says the very definition of "family" differs for immigrants, who often have more children and relatives living with them—and occasionally doubling up in bedrooms—than do other buyer groups.

Long Beach reputedly harbors the world's largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia. There are large immigrant enclaves throughout the country:

Prescription Refill

AN INDIAN-BORN PHARMACIST IS READY TO BUY AGAIN, BUT HASN'T FOUND THE RIGHT HOUSE YET.

Since November 2007, Vipul Patel has been watching workmen renovate a commercial space across the street from his pharmacy in Jersey City, N.J.

Patel will relocate his business into that building once it's done. But the time it's taking them to finish has made Patel wary about hiring contractors to build his next house.

Patel, 36, arrived from India in 1994. He and his family live in a 2,700-square-foot house in Edison, N.J., which he purchased in 2002 for \$488,000. Now, he's looking to spend up to \$1.2 million for a new home. His preferences include at least five bedrooms, a basement or ground-floor conservatory where he can entertain family and friends, and a first-floor space for a home office.

Originally, Patel budgeted about \$500,000 for land with an existing house he could raze and rebuild. But he soon realized that construction would run around \$150 per square foot, and the land would cost \$450,000. "Plus the headaches," he adds. Patel hasn't seen any new houses he's liked, so he's hoping to find a "relatively new" house on at least a half-acre. He's avoiding neighborhoods where smaller, less-expensive houses might be built in the future.

Patel thinks his current home will fetch \$550,000, and plans to put down as much as he can on any purchase. When asked how he can afford this, he explains "Indian people are very stingy. If they make \$100,000 a year, they are saving at least \$40,000."

Patel trusts his Realtor, Prudential's Pratiksha Kumar, more than previous agents who he says showed him only their listings. "I recently called her at 4:30 p.m. about one home, and she got me an appointment at 5:15 p.m." Patel prefers to live in a diverse community "so my [two] children have some idea of other cultures." He also believes that a house in an all-Indian neighborhood would be harder to resell.

Iranians in West Los Angeles, Somalis and Ethiopians in Lewiston, Maine; Arabs in Detroit, Iraqis in Minneapolis, Cubans in Miami, to say nothing of other Hispanic immigrants who make Texas, California, and Arizona their home.

But evidence that immigrants crave homogeneous neighborhoods is (see page 50)

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inconclusive. Nearly all home buyers interviewed for this article insisted they'd prefer buying and living in more diverse communities, partly to assimilate their children into American society quicker. "It just makes more sense," says the 32-year-old Bhatt, who since 2003 has lived in a 1,785-square-foot townhouse in K. Hovnanian's Society Hill development in Franklin Park, N.J.

SIZE MATTERS

Another characteristic that links immigrant buyers is their penchant for bigger homes with decent-sized yards to accommodate large and extended families. "Large," though, doesn't mean "McMansion" for immigrant buyers, cautions Retsinas. It usually has more to do with room count.

Bhatt, who emigrated from India in 1995 with his mother, and who recently married, told BUILDER this spring that he's looking to purchase a single-family house in the \$475,000 to \$530,000 range, with a basement and garage, and a room on the first floor where his parents could stay when they visit. (He's keeping his townhouse, which he'll rent to his brother.)

The curb appeal of the house, the security of the neighborhood, and the quality of nearby schools are important factors for immigrants. But when it comes down to what they actually buy, Realtors and demographers say Hispanics tend to gravitate toward existing homes they can fix up or upgrade. The 2,020-square-foot, single-family foreclosure home in the Miami suburb of West Kendall that Mendez paid \$316,000 for last fall needed another \$20,000 or so in work that included a paint job, bathroom renovation, and upstairs flooring and stair replacements.

By contrast, Asians lean toward new homes, as a status symbol and because "they don't want to have to fix things," says Pratiksha Kumar, a Prudential agent in Watchung, N.J., who deals a lot with Indian-born professionals. But finding something new they like is another matter (see "Prescription Refill," page 48), and has been a problem for a while: Buranakanchana says she searched for a new home for two years before spending more than \$500,000 in 1997 on the four-bedroom custom home in Glenview, Ill., where she lives today.

While it's rarely a deal breaker, some Asians desire homes that are built to the aesthetic system known as Feng Shui. That

Other immigrants tell their stories at:

www.builderonline.com/brave-new-world/

Helping Hand

A nonprofit group in Massachusetts gives immigrant home buyers a leg up.

Cross-Border Connection

A Texas builder hooks up with a local Realtor to market condos to Mexican nationals.

Abroad at Home

A Cuban-American nurse looks beyond Miami.

system touches upon everything from the house's position to the sun, how the front and back doors open, whether its interior corners are finished, where toilets are located, even the house's color and its street address numbers. "Some people are very strict about this," says Park.

DEAL OR NO DEAL

Norma Hinojosa, the co-owner of RE/MAX Elite in the border town of Mission, Texas, gets about 30 percent of her business from Mexican nationals who are purchasing second homes in the U.S. A recent client, an architect, plunked down \$600,000 in cash for one house and \$200,000 for another he'll live in while he renovates the pricier abode. "I wish I had more clients like this," says Hinojosa. Mesa, the Miami broker, says his Cuban-born clients often favor making big down payments and want 15-year mortgages.

These are exceptions, though, among Hispanic buyers, whom Realtors say generally have lower incomes than other immigrant groups, put down the minimum, and often need mortgage assistance. Myers observes that most Hispanics in California are buying homes at about 75 percent of the median price. Hinojosa adds "the guidelines are a little different" even for her affluent immigrant clients who borrow through American banks that demand from them "25 percent to 30 percent down," and full income documentation. Hinojosa's assistant, Adriana Valdes, says that because her American-born husband—who spent most of his life in Mexico until the couple relocated to Texas from Mexico City in 2007—hadn't established a credit history, they had to put down 25 percent on a

\$152,000 house they closed on in June 2008. He also had to show the bank financial statements from his computer equipment business in Mexico to secure the mortgage.

"When bank underwriters look at a foreign-born person, they will be more conservative about gray areas and demanding about documentation," observes Chris Nelson, director of the Metropolitan Research Center at the University of Utah, who has done extensive analyses of home buying patterns. "That will keep homeownership rates of [the] foreign born lower. They will be buying smaller homes as a result, or not buying at all."

Nelson's observation about banks might explain some Asians' aversion to borrowing altogether. Park notes that Asians own more small businesses than any other ethnic group in America. Their entrepreneurial spirit, though, can be a double-edged sword when those businesses deal mainly in cash, and mortgage lenders require income documentation. While Asian buyers may be better financed than other immigrant groups, their money sources aren't always transparent, say real estate agents. By reputation, though, Asians are big savers, and Korean families in particular are known to pool their resources to buy houses and businesses.

Lee and other sources also point out that Asian immigrant buyers are tough negotiators who haggle over everything, including the price of a house. "They are never done negotiating, even after escrow," says Jones of Coldwell Banker.

NEWFOUND FRIENDS

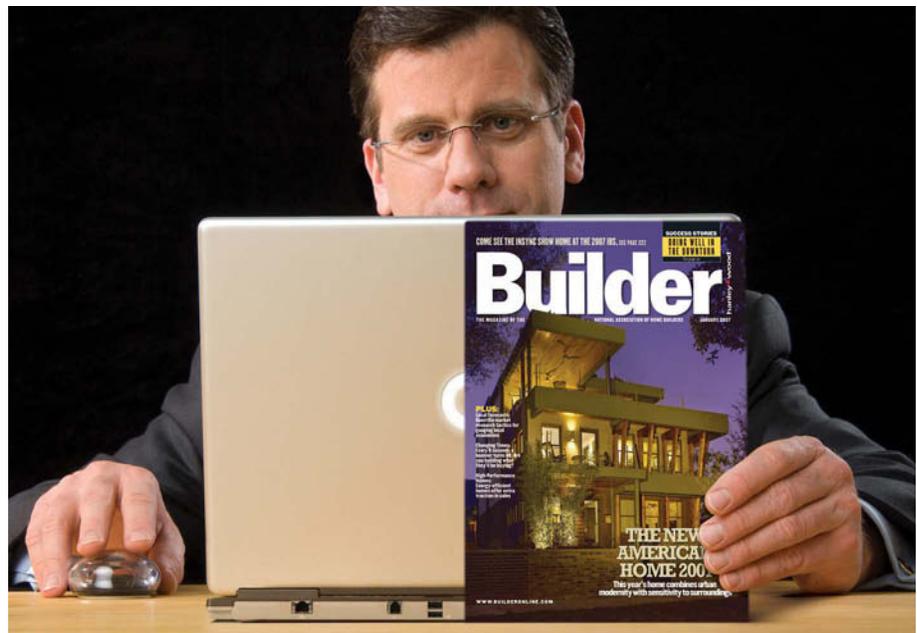
That being said, buying a home in the U.S. is still confusing and intimidating for many immigrant buyers. Not surprisingly, they look for someone they can trust. Builders who want to tap into these groups must acknowledge the role that Realtors play as confidants and guides through the home search and buying process. Kumar, who is known to her adoring clients by her nickname Preet, says her fluency in English, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, and Punjabi, is "a big advantage with customers who want to work with someone who has the same background," she says.

"They'll have you over for dinner, bring you gifts," says Grace Olson, an agent with Coldwell Banker in Long Beach, Calif., about her immigrant clients. Arney Mendez goes even further: He says his broker, Prudential's Miguel Solis, "is now like one of the family." *(see page 52)*

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SPECIAL REPORT

BRAVE NEW WORLD

MODEST PROPOSAL: For Judy Rosen and Brooks Townes (between moves) the ideal house would be small, but high quality.



REDESIGNING RETIREMENT
BY 2011, HALF OF ALL HOMEOWNERS WILL BE OVER 50. CURRENT HOUSING LANDSCAPE DOESN'T NECESSARILY
THEY WANT—OR NEED.

BY JENNY SULLIVAN



**BUT THE
PROVIDE WHAT**

HERNANDEZ/ENZO

BROOKS TOWNES AND JUDY ROSEN ARE FRUSTRATED. AFTER transplanting themselves from the Pacific Northwest to Asheville, N.C., for 12 years to care for an elderly parent, they're ready to move back home, and they're looking for a cozy nest no bigger than 1,000 square feet. But even in the peninsulas around Seattle, where progressive zoning reform has paved the way for a wider-than-average selection of jewel-box homes on small lots, the couple, who are 65 and 63, can't find quite what they're looking for.

Townes, an active, eco-minded type, imagines the perfect set up as a modest, detached dwelling with one bedroom, a home office, a two-car garage, and a guest cottage in the neighborhood that residents can take turns reserving for visitors. He'd also like a community studio for woodworking, boat-building, and other messy projects.

Some luxuries Townes is willing to share, and some he's willing to do without. Nice millwork, cabinetry, and finishes are not in the category of things he'll forgo. "Small spaces can still be high quality," says the former journalist, who is just slightly ahead of the oldest of the Baby Boomers, who will turn 65 in 2011—a year that, with any luck, will mean happier times for home builders.

"I don't need to show off, but good solid stuff is important to my generation," he says. "We don't like ... pressboard furniture and cheap countertops. A lot of builders have equated small with chintzy, and that's where they've gone wrong."

SHIP SHAPE

Not everyone born between 1946 and 1964 shares Townes' retirement dream of a semi-communal lifestyle. But there are enough like-minded voices pleading for a combination of small and high-end that builders are already beginning to make some fundamental shifts in what they are building.

"The impulse buyer does not exist right now, but I think they will come back if we change our product," says Steve Romeyn, co-founder of Windsong Properties, a builder of active adult communities in the suburbs outside of Atlanta. "If the houses that were selling last year were 2,500 to 2,700 square feet with a finished bonus room, maybe now I need to scale back by 220 square feet. But I can't switch from tile to vinyl floors or from granite countertops back to laminate. The mature buyer still wants quality. It's like choosing between the BMW 3 series and the 5 series. If you sit in those cars, the only difference is the size, not the quality of the leather."

Charlotte, N.C.-based Simonini Builders, which for years specialized in large

luxury homes priced in the \$800,000 to \$4 million range, is similarly realizing that size may be a tipping point that gets some buyers off the fence. Recognizing that the times, they are a-changing—particularly for the loyal Baby Boomers who have counted among its best customers—the builder recently asked architect Dominick Tringali to rethink what might appeal to buyers whose financial means have downshifted post-meltdown, even if their tastes have

"A lot of builders have equated small with chintzy, and that's where they've gone wrong."—Brooks Townes, home shopper

not. Tringali's response: the "Classic Yacht Villas," a series of six house plans ranging from 2,200 to 2,800 square feet, to be priced between \$475,000 and \$550,000.

The tight little plans do away with formal dining and living rooms, but hold the line on ample kitchen/entertainment areas, nice master baths with his-and-hers vanities, and meaningful details such as drop zones and beamed ceilings. The pro forma works because the houses can be built on 55-foot lots, thus allowing the builder to redraw the lines on existing site plans and get more mileage out of its land holdings.

"Yachts take a lot of craftsmanship and sophistication and put it in a small, compartmentalized area," says Tringali. "People can't buy like they used to. Now, if someone goes to buy a \$600,000 to \$700,000 house, the banks are looking for 20 percent down, meaning they need to have \$125,000 in cash to get a reasonable mortgage. We realized we needed to get these houses down in price to make them viable for empty-nesters to buy in the next two years."

GRAVE NEW WORLD

One of the paradoxes now defining this massive generation of 79 million is that a disparity exists between what buyers say they want and what they can (see page 54)

realistically afford. Even market-corrected prices and record-low interest rates aren't an easy sell for many 45- to 54-year-olds who, in the wake of the housing bust and Wall Street collapse, have seen their average net worth erode by more than 45 percent, according to a recent study by the D.C.-based Center for Economic Policy Research. For those aged 55 to 64, the losses haven't been quite as dramatic, but nevertheless amount to a 38 percent drop in net wealth.

"My sense is that before the crash, maybe up to 15 percent of the national market could push and squeeze themselves into million-dollar homes," says Chris Nelson, director of the Metropolitan Research Center at the University of Utah. "Now that number is more like 5 percent. The high-end home market was jacked artificially high this decade and will correct itself to be artificially low for the next decade."

This won't be an easy pill for the so-called "Me Generation" to swallow—particularly in combination with aging. Plenty of Boomers are in denial about their deteriorating eyesight and knees. Now add to that denial about their financial means. A study released by McKinsey Global Institute last November looked at non-mortgage debt, income, and assets, and found 69 percent of Boomers unprepared to maintain their present lifestyles into retirement. Factor in home equity and the ranks of the prepared still add up to only 38 percent.

"This lack of financial preparation will affect not just the poor, but large numbers of middle-class Americans as well," the study authors concluded. "Less than half of Boomer households earning \$60,000 to \$90,000 per year are prepared."

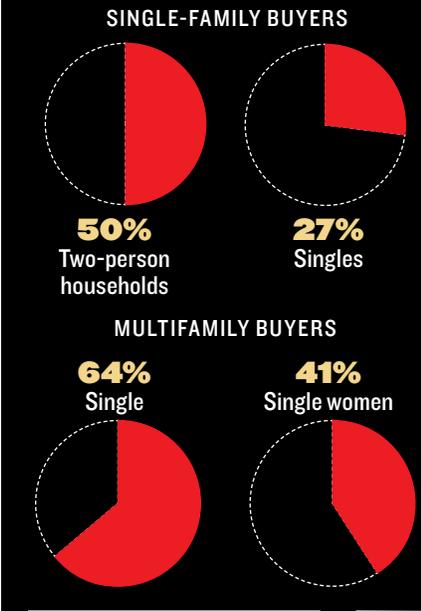
And this new reality will no doubt influence their housing decisions. "Most Boomers probably have stayed in their homes long enough that they still have some equity, but when they move they won't carry the equity they had planned on with them," Nelson observes. "Before the crash they would have moved to fancier [homes]. Now more of them will be looking to move to smaller, less-expensive units. And if they want to help their kids buy homes that will mean even more financial stress."

TRIAL AND ERROR

Even for buyers with money in their pockets and robust FICO scores, finding that new sweet spot isn't easy.

When Gary and Karen Brown became empty-nesters last year, they put their

Boomers at Home



- Among Boomers shopping for new homes:
- 85% consider a walk-in pantry a top kitchen feature
 - 80% want an island work area
 - 69% want a home office
 - 64% want a single-story home
 - 64% want special-use storage

FROM TOP: SOURCES: U.S. CENSUS; NAHB CONSUMER PREFERENCES SURVEY 2008

4,000-square-foot detached home on the market and moved into a townhouse just shy of 2,000 square feet. That's when the couple, who are 55 and 54, realized they'd downsized too much. So they sold the townhouse and notched back up to a 3,100-square-foot, master-down cottage in Somerset, an active adult neighborhood by Windsong Properties in Woodstock, Ga.

"We downsized because it was just the two of us ... and we didn't want to continue paying for the utilities and maintenance on a larger home," says Karen, a commercial Realtor who continues to work from home (as does her husband). "In our opinion it was silly to pay more money than we needed to.

We sold and gave away to charity a lot of things we did not need. The cost of moving ended up being less than the expense of keeping the bigger home for one year. But then we found that [cutting our living space in half] was too much, so we upsized."

For John and Brenda Herr, both 60, finding a place that felt just right required some similar shuffling. In 2008, the couple left their 4,400-square-foot home in Ohio and moved south to Atlanta to be closer to their kids and grandchildren. After purchasing an 1,800-square-foot rambler in a conventional subdivision, they realized the house in and of itself wasn't enough. Community mattered, and it wasn't a year before they moved again—this time to an active adult setting less than a mile away. They now have lease-to-own agreements on their two previous homes and just closed on a 2,200-square-foot home at Blackberry Run, another Windsong neighborhood. Their new place has a casita that connects to the main house via a breezeway, which John uses as an office.

"It's a good time to buy, but not a good time to sell," he says. "The leases have taken care of our mortgage payment, and [increased our deductions], but we're not interested in being in the rental business. Hopefully the economy will come back in 18 months so we can unload those houses."

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Is it possible to make generalizations about what Boomers, those fabled iconoclasts, want in a house? Numerous studies tracking their migration and holding patterns point to a common desire for single-story plans, low-maintenance living, high design, and the ability to live near their kids.

Employment has also become a more prominent factor in their housing choices, given that the ranks of Americans planning to retire at 65 is shrinking. In 2001, 11.4 percent of 55+ buyers who had recently purchased single-family homes cited "close to work" as a reason for moving, according to Census data. By 2007, that number climbed to 16.6 percent. Corroborating this trend, some 85 percent of respondents in a recent McKinsey study said it was "somewhat or extremely likely" they would continue to work beyond traditional retirement age.

But for every Boomer intent on moving (for financial, personal, or career reasons) there are three whose preference is to stay put. In a recent AARP survey, 79 percent of participants said they

(see page 56)

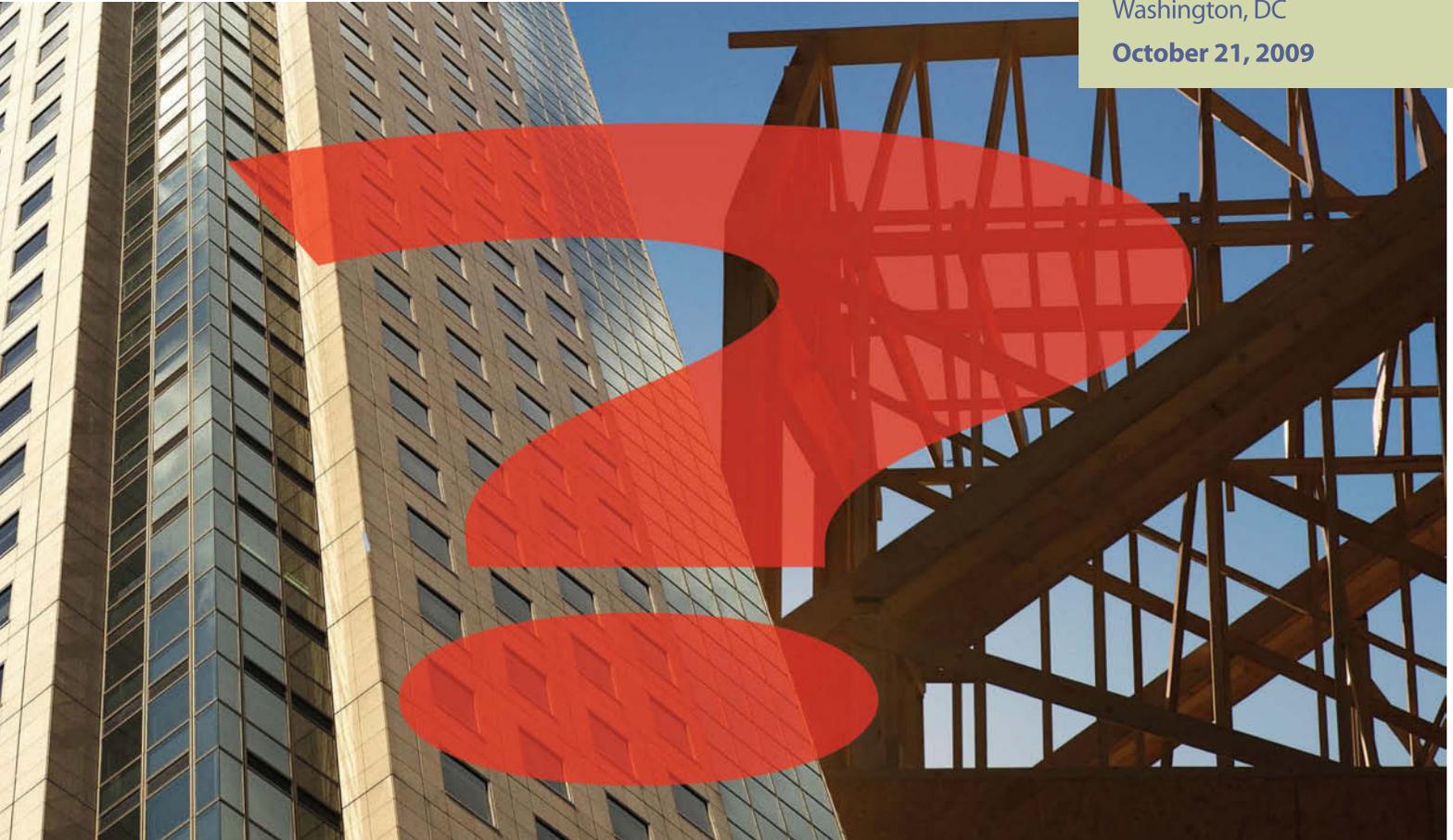
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OLD IS NEW: Boni and Jim Lillibridge retrofitted to make their home roomier, brighter, and safer.

wanted to “stay in their current home for as long as possible.” These findings dovetail with Census findings from the latest American Housing Survey. When asked to rate their satisfaction with the communities in which they live on a scale of one to 10, nearly 80 percent of 55+ respondents gave a ranking of eight or higher.

The problem is that many of these existing homes and communities were never designed for aging in place. And with the number of persons 65 and older expected to reach 40 million by next year, those shortcomings are becoming more apparent.

Jim and Boni Lillibridge were comfortable in their 1950s ranch home in Shelby Township north of Detroit, and even imagined it as the perfect retirement house, given its single-level plan. That notion changed when Jim, 67, a retired Army sergeant, first class, experienced complications three days after returning home following heart surgery. Narrow hallways left paramedics unable to maneuver a stretcher around a 90-degree turn leading to the master bedroom—a problem that could have proved deadly had Lillibridge not managed to take a few steps by himself to the gurney.

Shortly thereafter, the Lillibridges hired builder Bill Borchert, a certified aging-in-place specialist, to retrofit their house. The remodel included reconfiguring and widening hallways to fix traffic flow problems, as well as a new kitchen that is more conducive to family gatherings with increased storage,

open seating, and improved lighting. Price tag: about \$55,000.

“The Lillibridges were comfortable there and liked the neighborhood,” says Borchert, noting that most of the clients who come to his design build/firm are over 55. “We made it possible for them to stay.”

GRAYING THE 'BURBS

When the housing market will truly rebound remains unclear, but the aging of America is quantifiable. The number of people over 55 is expected to reach 76.6 million by 2010 and 85.3 million by 2014.

For more Boomer stories go to:

www.builderonline.com/brave-new-world/

What Boomers Want

Four couples voice their home buying wants, needs, and frustrations.

The Active Adult Option

Interest in age-qualified communities is growing.

Club Sandwiches

Why more Boomers are living with their parents and kids.

Accessible by Law

Where universal design legislation is taking root.

Many experts say our communities aren't ready for the sea change. “Aging in the suburbs is not necessarily an easy thing to do in neighborhoods that were originally designed for young families,” notes Elinor Ginzler, director of AARP's Livable Communities Initiative, an effort dedicated to promoting more senior-friendly building and land-use practices. Current inventories of both new and resale suburban homes are typically larger than older residents need with considerable maintenance, and many areas do not have sidewalks, she notes.

To this end, AARP is plugging model legislation for zoning reform that allows smaller homes, as well as accessory dwelling units such as granny flats, without variances. The organization is also advocating land use that places housing within walking distance of shopping, public transit, and services such as health care.

The question is whether the change will happen fast enough, and whether members of the second largest generation in U.S. history will find the kinds of homes they need—when they need them—in dealing with their increasingly complex life circumstances.

“We have made appropriate choices to achieve the lifestyle we have and have been fortunate thus far,” says home buyer Karen Brown. “We have healthy living parents at this time, and our one child is self-sufficient with positive prospects for the future. Any of those variables could change tomorrow.”

(see page 58)

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SPECIAL REPORT

BRAVE NEW WORLD



WOMAN'S INTUITION: Part-time Air National Guard reservist Kristen Wenrick, 26, looked for six months and used her VA loan to buy her Columbus, Ohio, townhouse from M/I Homes.



TWENTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD JONATHAN HONG IS A MEMBER OF THE Millennial generation, and he represents the type of buyer that could make builders very happy in the very near future.

An electrical engineer, Hong bought his first home in 2008 just one year out of college. “I didn’t see the need for a condo or an apartment,” Hong says. “I wanted something not too big and not too small, so I thought a townhouse would be perfect for me. Truth be told, I wasn’t thinking about location. I think cost played a big factor.”

With married couples becoming a smaller share of the home buying population and unmarried-partner, single-parent, and single-person households increasing, the Millennial generation is emerging as a heavyweight in housing. By the sheer force of their numbers—which is reportedly between 80 million and 90 million—Millennials (also referred to by the less popular Generation Y) are poised to change the home buying and building landscape. Builders, developers, and real estate professionals who ignore this group do so at their peril.

“Real estate agents may wonder why they should care about the Generation Y age group, ages 18 to 30,” Jessica Lautz, a senior research analyst at the National Association of Realtors, wrote on the organization’s website in 2008. “These unique home buyers are the youngest of the home buying segment and are the most likely to purchase a home in the next two years in comparison to any other age group.”

“The bulk of this group right now is in college,” says Shyam Kannan, vice presi-

BOOMER BABIES

According to NAS Recruitment Communications, a Cleveland-based human resources research firm, Millennials include individuals born between 1977 and 1994 (though some demographers mark the dates from 1982 to as late as 2003). “The largest generation since the Baby Boomers, the Millennials are defined by their numbers,” the group writes in its report “Generation Y: The Millennials—Ready or Not, Here They Come.” “They will have a huge social and economic impact.”

The good news for builders is that Millennials favor homeownership and believe in its importance in wealth creation. Earlier this year in its national “Gen Y Survey,” The Concord Group found that respondents overwhelmingly see real estate as a good financial investment. “Sixty-two percent view wealth creation and 52 percent view retirement investment as ‘very big advantages’ of owning real estate,” the group says.

Despite this large pool of future buyers and their positive view of homeownership,

HEAR THEM ROAR

MILLENNIALS MAKE UP ALMOST A THIRD OF THE U.S. POPULATION, AND THEY WILL FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE HOW BUILDERS DO BUSINESS. BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

dent and director of research and development at Bethesda, Md.-based Robert Charles Lesser & Co. (RCLCO), a consulting firm to the home building and development industry. “Let’s assume they begin to graduate from college in 2010, 2011, roughly about when they turn 22, and they rent for two to three years. They’ll start hitting the home buying market in 2013, and by 2015 they’re in the peak time for home buying. Just in terms of numbers, this group is hugely important.”

the prospects for capturing their sales may not be as easy as it sounds. Millennials, it turns out, don’t behave like their Boomer parents, and it appears they will not seek the same type of housing solutions.

“What [Millennials] are indicating is that they’re making very different decisions than their parents,” Kannan says. “They are choosing lifestyle over work style. They’re the ones that are likely to choose a home based on their ability to canoe on the weekends, if (see page 60)

MATT REICH



NO MAN'S LAND: Jonathan Hong, 24, bought his first home almost one hour from Washington, D.C., but now he wants to live in the city.

that's what they do. They're also choosing transit and close-in locations much more than their parents did."

Hong, for example, bought his new house from NV Homes in Frederick, Md., which is a 10-minute drive from his job in Germantown, Md. "That's the one good thing about the house," he says. "I didn't want anything more than about a half-hour commute and that's what I got."

But Frederick, Md., also is 45 miles from the vibrancy and nightlife of Washington, D.C., and that has been a problem. "I wanted to stay within a [price] range that was comfortable for me, and I didn't mind the location at first," says Hong, a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. "Going from a city environment in college, I didn't want to be in the city when I moved. But as I started living [in Frederick], I realize the city might have been a better choice for me."

LOCATION, LOCATION

It's not surprising that Hong now yearns for the city. Demographers say Millennials generally prefer urban locations or at least denser environments to the suburbs. In an RCLCO survey of Millennials, about 33 percent of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to buy small-lot single-family detached homes, and similar percentages indicated that "they'd be will-

ing to trade off and go into a townhouse or condo if it offered the location they wanted," Kannan says. "The issue is that while product isn't irrelevant, product is now less important than place."

Young buyers don't all think alike, of course, but the urge for members of this group to live in urban locations or close to activities that they enjoy is a strong one. The desire is certainly important for Lina (24) and Stefan (31) Schneider, who rent an apartment in the resurgent downtown of Silver Spring, Md. "Everything is close by," says Stefan, who is accustomed to density in his native Vienna, Austria. "The metro is one block away, it's close to downtown and restaurants, and we can walk everywhere."

But the Schneiders are facing a conundrum. They're looking to buy a townhouse in their neighborhood, with a basement and enough space for Lina, an artist, to paint and sculpt. But prices are high, and the couple does not want to move too far away. "I don't want to drive more than a half hour to get to work," says Stefan, vice president of finance and treasury at Frequentis USA in Columbia, Md. The couple has expanded its search to about four miles out in the suburbs, but they don't want to go any farther and are prepared to continue living in their apartment until they find what they want. "We are happy to stay where we are because

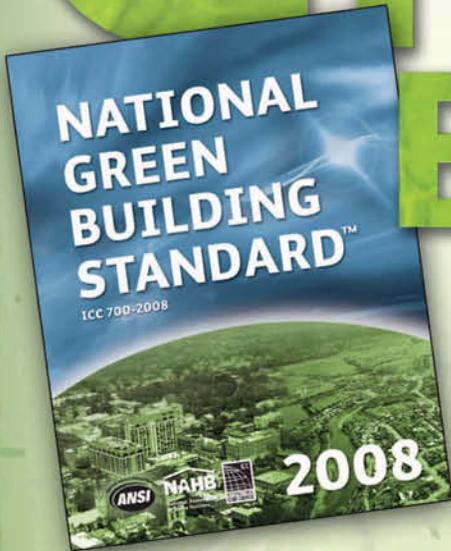
we like [the building and neighborhood] a lot," Stefan says.

Location has always been the key in real estate, but it's even more of a driver for Millennials. And ideal locations need not be in downtown urban cores. Suburban-based density is just as attractive to some buyers, demographers and builders say.

"There are going to be people who want to live near where their life revolves," says Bill McDonough, chief marketing officer for M/I Homes in Columbus, Ohio. "And for many, that's going to bring them back into proximity to urban living." McDonough says this type of development is promising because many businesses, transportation hubs, and commercial areas already have moved out of cities. "The axiom of location, location remains," he says, "but as centers of living continue to morph into new places around cities, people are looking for their homes there."

The data seems to support McDonough's theory. In The Concord Group's 2009 "Gen Y Survey," lifestyle (52 percent) and employment (49 percent) were the top reasons respondents chose their current location, and proximity to employment was the No. 1 factor (24 percent) why respondents will choose their next residence. Transportation also was important. "Eighty-one percent responded that it's 'very or somewhat (see page 62)

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important' to live near alternative modes of transit." It also showed that 67 percent would pay a premium to live closer to alternative modes of transit in their next residence.

LADIES' CHOICE

A subset of the Millennials that builders also should get to know is its female buyers. Demographic data shows that by 2010 households headed by a woman will be well over 30 million, and many are buying their own homes. About two years ago, M/I Homes noticed the phenomenon.

"[Millennials] are buying homes earlier in their lives than any generation before them, and women are really the driver," says McDonough.

Female respondents in RCLCO's survey indicated "a strong preference" for the city and "are much more likely to choose what we call 'safe urbanism,'" says Kannan. "Safety is very important to them, but they want to be able to walk to shopping and dining."

This squares with what Rebecca Safford was looking for when she was shopping for a home. "Location was probably the No. 1

She also likes the modern interiors and the focus on energy efficiency.

"We specifically did not look at demographics as much as we looked at psychographics [when we were developing Ice House]," says Randi Dorman, a partner in R&R 17th St. LLC, which developed the project. "What was interesting is that different parts of the building dictated the size of the units, but because they range from 621 square feet to 2,344 square feet it opened us up to a wide range of demographics."

"Everything we did was based on light and space and proportion," Paulus explains. "We had the opportunity to create more bedrooms, but we opted not to do that, which was a huge design decision to create this more open lofty feel."

The Ice House developers may not have been targeting women or Millennials consciously, but they inadvertently did so with edgy design, open loft-like interiors, and other features that are attractive to these groups. KRBD in Austin, Texas, attracts a large share of young buyers for the same reasons, says architect/developer Chris Krager. "It's more of an intuitive thing," he explains. "We focus on affordability, mod-

its buyers, M/I Homes is responding with new house designs to meet this audience. "When we design homes today we are looking at who the buyer is, and we are looking at affordability," says Dan O'Malley, vice president of product development. "We want to make sure that the houses we create are attainable with the way the [economic] situation is today."

Earlier this year, M/I announced the "eco series" line of smaller-footprint, efficiently designed, economically priced, and ecologically smart homes that will appeal to Millennials and women. "My first goal with these houses was to unclutter the plan," O'Malley explains. "I start taking out the redundant spaces, and the net result is a floor plan that leaves in the high-value spaces."

The Novare Group, an Atlanta-based developer of urban mixed-use high-rise condos, attracts young buyers because of its built-in hook (location), but development manager Marc Bramburt says the company still works hard to attract this demographic. "One of the things we do is invest a lot of money in the common areas and in amenities, which include elaborate club rooms and fitness centers," he says. "Technology is another area where we differentiate ourselves."

Novare uses an intranet system called HALO that allows residents to, among other things, access HOA information, request assistance from the concierge, or submit maintenance requests. "We also have [Internet-enabled] thermostats, which allow residents to configure their system from the Internet or from a Blackberry," Bramburt adds.

So what should other builders and developers be doing to attract the coming wave of educated, young buyers? "We've been telling builders to go back to the drawing board," Kannan explains. "The real estate industry is notoriously slow to adapt to change, and we've been advising our builder and developer clients that the old models that worked very well for them through the 1980s and 1990s ... are not models that represent the growth in the industry."

"If they haven't done so already," Kannan continues, "builders and developers need to get over the pain and suffering of learning to build infill mixed-use." ■

"If they haven't done so already, builders and developers need to get over the pain and suffering of learning to build infill mixed-use."

—Shyam Kannan, RCLCO

thing anytime I looked for a place to rent or buy," says the 31-year-old graduate student and academic advisor at the University of Arizona in Tucson. "I've always lived downtown or close to the university. That's important to me."

Ultimately, Safford moved in with her then-boyfriend Scott into his studio in the Ice House Lofts, an adaptive reuse project by architect/developer Rob Paulus who is known for edgy urban infill projects in the Tucson area. When the now-married couple needed more space, they sold the studio and bought a 1,300-square-foot, one-bedroom in the same development. "The Ice House is wonderful because it's an old historic building that was gutted and redone on the inside so it's perfect," Safford says.

There are many reasons Rebecca likes her home, but because she lives a hectic life she especially likes the fact that it has surfaces and finishes that are easy to clean—important features for many female buyers.

ern design, and energy efficiency." He continues, "We've had people from across the spectrum, but when we look at the kinds of inquiries and interest we get, it's definitely younger buyers."

Architectural features and design are important to young buyers, especially for WINKS (women with income and no kids) who "need places for hobbies, activities, and working from home," the RCLCO research concludes. "Architectural details within indoor living areas can provide subtle articulations suitable for suggesting reading nooks, yoga corners, and laptop crevices." The RCLCO report continues, "Meticulous attention to design will be necessary [to capture the attention of these buyers]. For example, a focus on height and light can help smaller urban homes live larger."

Sensing a shift in the gender and age of

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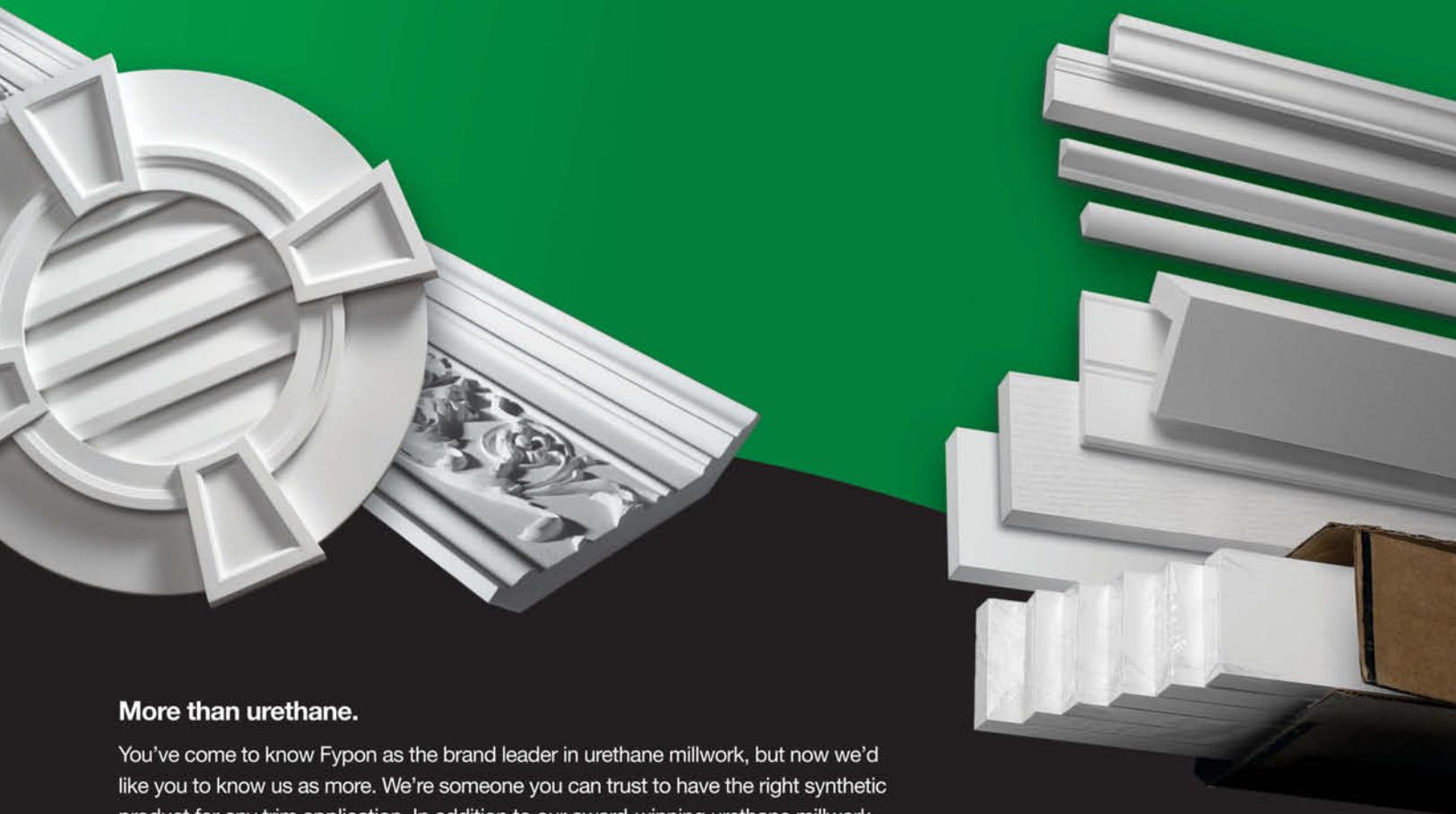
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FIRST



SECOND

First Floor: 1,755 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 864 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,619 sq. ft. ■
Bedrooms: 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 56' - 0" X 53' - 0" ■
Foundation: Crawlspace, Slab, Unfinished Walkout Basement



FIRST



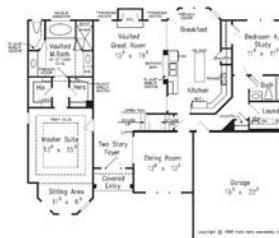
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First Floor: 1,688 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 558 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,246 sq. ft. ■
Bonus Space: 269 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■
Dimensions: 54' - 0" X 48' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Slab, Unfinished Walkout Basement



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PLAN # HWB1080005 ■ 5-SET \$705 ■ 8-SET N/A ■ REPRO \$865 ■ CAD \$1,415 ■ PDF \$865



Square Footage: 2,097 ■ **Bonus Space:** 352 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■ **Dimensions:** 64' - 10" X 59' - 6"



PLAN # HWB1080006 ■ 5-SET \$800 ■ 8-SET \$855 ■ REPRO \$1,200 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF N/A

Square Footage: 2,818 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 ■ **Dimensions:** 70' - 0" X 69' - 10"



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First Floor: 2,247 sq. ft. ■ Second Floor: 868 sq. ft. ■ Total: 3,115 sq. ft. ■ Bedrooms: 4 ■ Bathrooms: 3 1/2 ■ Dimensions: 68' - 10" X 66' - 5" ■ Foundation: Crawspace, Slab

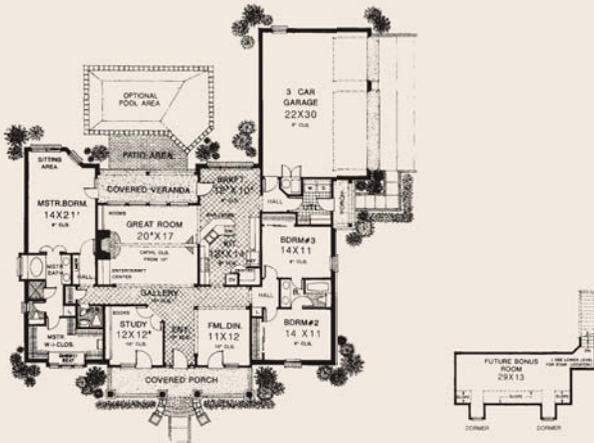


FIRST



SECOND

**Square Footage: 2,387 ■ Bonus Space: 377 sq. ft. ■ Bedrooms: 3 ■
Bathrooms: 2 1/2 ■ Dimensions: 69' - 6" X 68' - 11" ■ Foundation:
Crawspace, Slab**



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**First Floor: 3,168 sq. ft. ■ Second Floor: 998 sq. ft. ■ Total: 4,166
sq. ft. ■ Bonus Space: 210 sq. ft. ■ Bedrooms: 4 ■ Bathrooms: 3
1/2 ■ Dimensions: 90' - 0" X 63' - 5" ■ Foundation: Crawspace, Slab,
Unfinished Basement**



FIRST

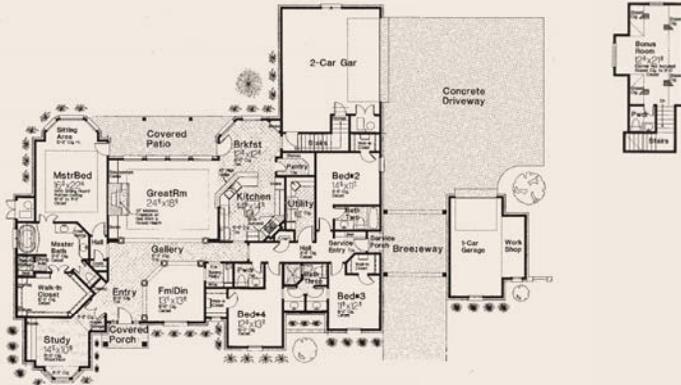


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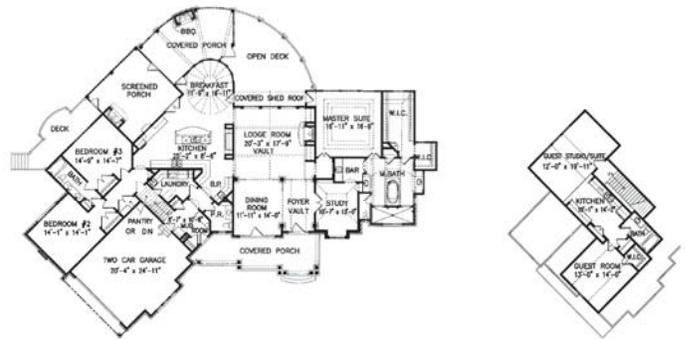
Square Footage: 3,310 ■ **Bonus Space:** 325 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■
Bathrooms: 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 112' - 0" X 81' - 6" ■ **Foundation:**
 Crawlspace, Slab



PLAN # HWB1080011 ■ 5-SET \$925 ■
 8-SET \$995 ■ REPO \$1,200 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF N/A

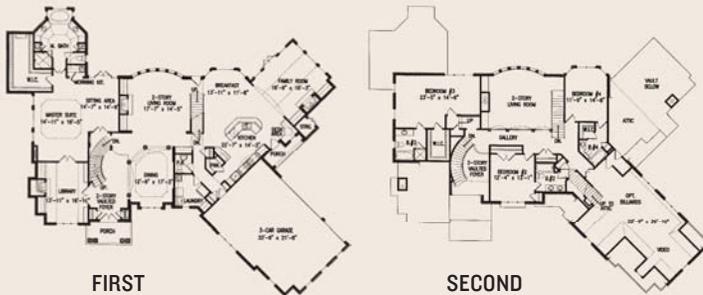


Square Footage: 3,126 ■ **Bonus Space:** 732 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■
Bathrooms: 2 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 104' - 7" X 83' - 2" ■ **Foundation:**
 Crawlspace, Slab, Unfinished Walkout Basement



PLAN # HWB1080012 ■ 5-SET \$2,495 ■ 8-SET N/A
 ■ REPO \$2,495 ■ CAD \$4,250 ■ PDF \$2,495

First Floor: 3,061 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 1,315 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 4,376 sq. ft. ■
Bonus Space: 692 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 4 1/2 ■
Dimensions: 94' - 4" X 79' - 2" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Unfinished
 Walkout Basement



PLAN # HWB1080013 ■ 5-SET \$2,626 ■
 8-SET N/A ■ REPO \$2,626 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF \$2,626

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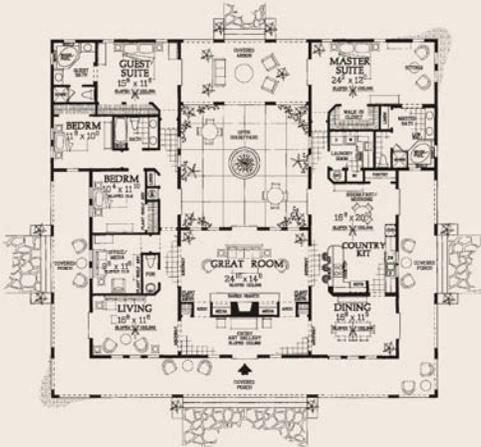
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PLAN # HWB1080014 ■ 5-SET \$630 ■
8-SET \$750 ■ REPRO \$935 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF \$935

Square Footage: 2,090 ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 1/2 ■
Dimensions: 84' - 6" X 64' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace



Square Footage: 3,163 ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■
Dimensions: 75' - 2" X 68' - 8" ■ **Foundation:** Slab



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PLAN # HWB1080015 ■ 5-SET \$795 ■ 8-SET \$855 ■
REPRO \$1,065 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF \$1,065



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PLAN # HWB1080016 ■ 5-SET \$900 ■ 8-SET \$950
■ REPRO \$1,250 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF \$1,250

First Floor: 1,804 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 1,041 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,845 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 57' - 3" X 71' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Finished Walkout Basement



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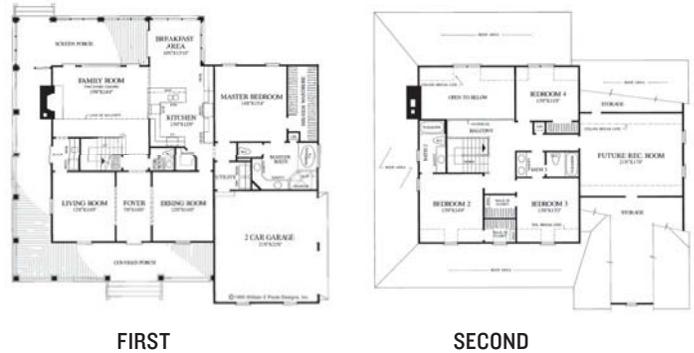
Square Footage: 2,151 ■ **Bonus Space:** 814 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 2 ■ **Dimensions:** 61' - 0" X 55' - 8" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Unfinished Basement



PLAN # HWB1080017 ■ 5-SET \$800 ■ 8-SET \$875 ■ REPRO \$1,100 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF N/A



First Floor: 1,913 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 997 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,910 sq. ft. ■ **Bonus Space:** 377 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 63' - 0" X 59' - 4" ■ **Foundation:** Crawlspace, Unfinished Basement



PLAN # HWB1080018 ■ 5-SET \$800 ■ 8-SET \$875 ■ REPRO \$1,100 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF N/A

First Floor: 2,892 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 1,120 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 4,012 sq. ft. ■ **Bedrooms:** 4 ■ **Bathrooms:** 4 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 74' - 0" X 70' - 0" ■ **Foundation:** Finished Walkout Basement



PLAN # HWB1080019 ■ 5-SET N/A ■ 8-SET N/A ■ REPRO \$1,600 ■ CAD N/A ■ PDF \$1,600

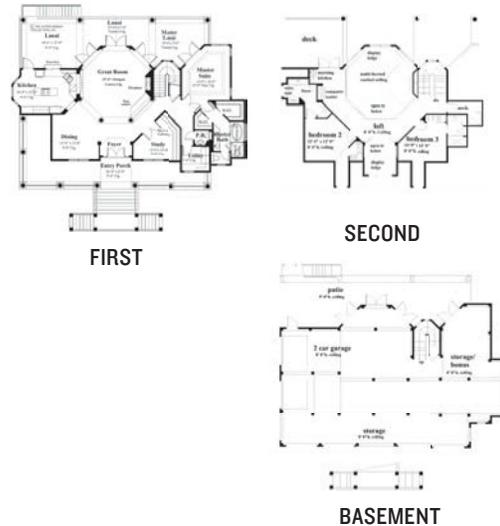
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PLAN # **HWB1080020** ■ 5-SET N/A ■ 8-SET N/A ■
 REPRO \$1,378 ■ CAD \$2,480 ■ PDF \$1,378

First Floor: 1,855 sq. ft. ■ **Second Floor:** 901 sq. ft. ■ **Total:** 2,756 sq. ft. ■
Bedrooms: 3 ■ **Bathrooms:** 3 1/2 ■ **Dimensions:** 66' - 0" X 50' - 0" ■
Foundation: Island Basement



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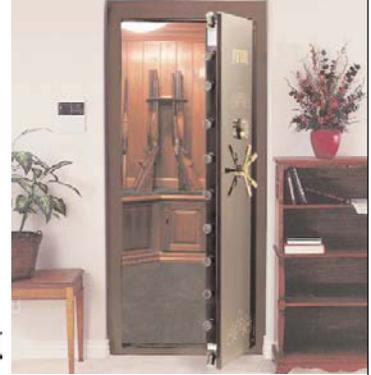
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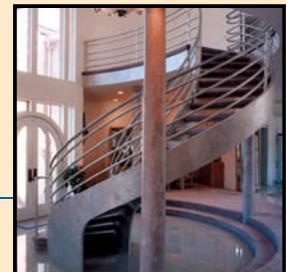
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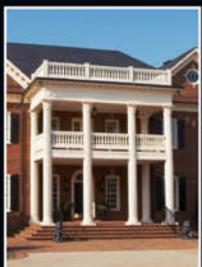


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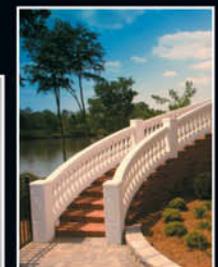
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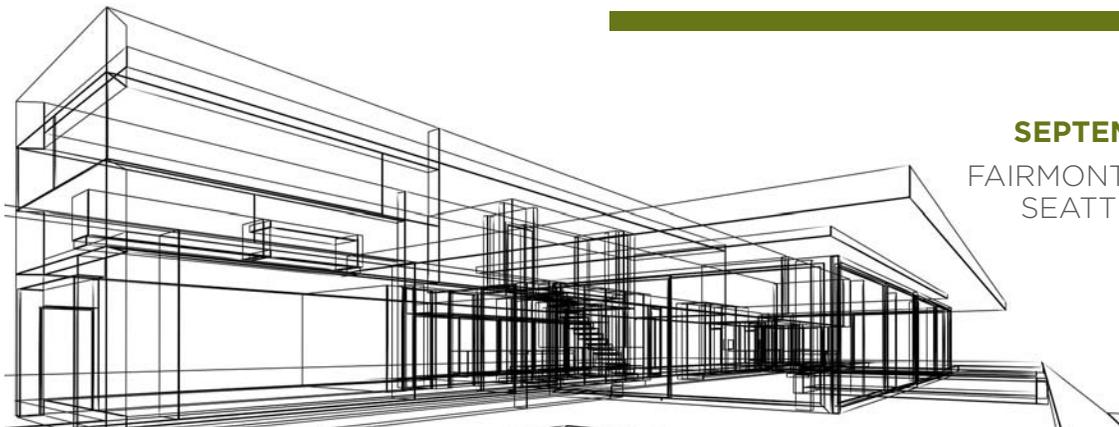
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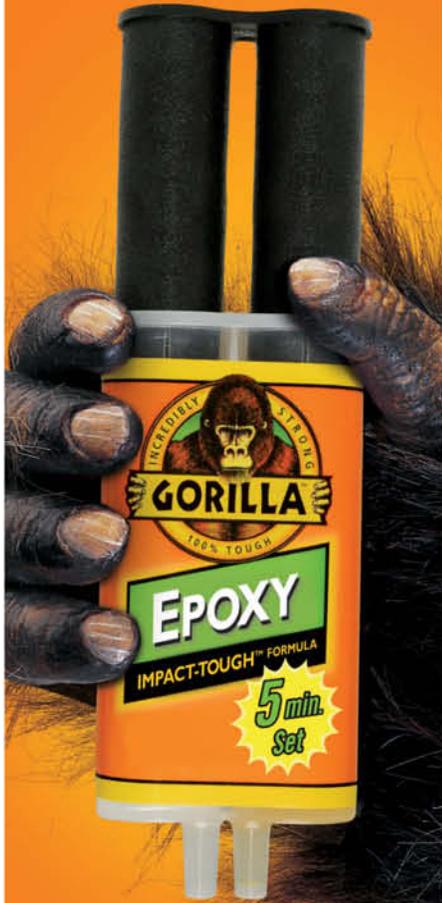
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AS THE HOUSING MARKET GETS BACK on its feet, builders will be challenged to devise and execute marketing strategies that can attract new, more diverse groups of buyers who are likely to drive the industry’s future growth. Marketing expert Seth Godin says builders can separate from the pack and establish a brand if they’d stop thinking of themselves as providers “of me-too products,” and re-establish themselves as marketers, “showmen,” and relationship builders. Godin has written 10 books, including *Permission Marketing* and the e-book *Unleashing the Ideavirus*. *Successful Meetings* magazine has chosen Godin as one of its 21 Speakers for the Next Century, and Yahoo! acquired his interactive direct marketing firm, Yoyodyne, in 1998. Godin shared some of his thoughts with *BUILDER* last month.—*John Caulfield*

Q: During the housing recession, builders have relied heavily on discounts and incentives to sell homes. What do you think of that strategy going forward, as buyers slowly return?

A: Builders and agents didn’t build relationships, they made sales, which made sense because that’s what the market wanted. Now, though, the rules are totally different. Prices aren’t guaranteed to go up, are they? And if houses are all the same I’m going to buy the cheap one. The answer is to make an amazing house and to market it, not sell it. Build a relationship, not a sale.

Q: New buyers say they place as much importance on their community as their house, which they see as a refuge or retreat. Is that a marketing angle builders should pursue more aggressively?

A: I don’t think [consumers] are being truthful. They’re not spending a lot of time in the clubhouse. What [builders] can do, though, is create communities where walking happens, where interactions happen. That’s the secret ... a house is worth more because of the neighborhood.

Q: Immigrants are a growing customer base. But how can builders craft their marketing strategies to reach the greatest number of buyers without ignoring cultural nuances?

A: Don’t underestimate the desire of groups to live with one another, to identify, to connect. The American Dream isn’t gone. It’s just changing.

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