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Construction LLC**

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David Clark Construction LLC

By Christine Arpe Gang

In some ways, David Clark Construction LLC is like a mom and pop company.

David is a "pop" who tends to every detail from hiring subcontractors, to keeping the books and supervising construction. "I'm involved in every aspect of the business," he said. "I'm a bit of a control freak when it comes to building." His wife, Laura, an affiliate broker with Prudential Collins-Maury Realtors, handles sales and marketing for the company. "She sometimes helps me with interior finishes and furnishings, too, so everything in the house isn't brown and leather," said David, who is 31.

His hands-on approach to every detail is possible because the business is relatively small. "Building six to eight houses a year is fine with me," he said. "I don't want to do 30 or 40."

Currently, he has two speculative homes for sale in The Enclave, a five-phase development featuring luxury homes and luxury patio homes in Germantown. He's currently working on two custom houses, also in The Enclave.

He likes the development at Wolf River Boulevard and Forest Hill-Irene Road for two primary reasons. "Germantown is always a strong location," he said.

And his cousins, owners of Clark & Clark, are the developers. "They always do a great job, including the brick walls and landscaping at the entrances," he said. The streets are wide enough for vehicles to traverse, even if cars are parked on each side. Some of the lots, such as the one where his model home is built, feature a rear-loading option.





The backyard of the model home has a large outdoor fireplace and space for a swimming pool if the homeowner chooses to install one. The 4,043-square-foot model home, priced at \$698,900, is loaded with amenities buyers want. "A second bedroom downstairs is a must now," David said.

"This house actually has three bedrooms downstairs."

Although the model has a charming formal living room, that space is increasingly being sacrificed to gain space for extra bedrooms downstairs.

The second bedroom is often used as a home office or as a guest room for visiting in-laws or a combination of both.

"One of my house plans has a 6-by-6-foot room off the kitchen that serves as a computer nook," David said. "That's been a popular design."

The kitchen in the model home is open to a breakfast area and a hearth room centered around a fireplace with a place for a flat-screen television above the mantel.

The kitchen features raised-panel wood cabinets with full-extension wood drawers - and lots of them.

The gas cooktop is the commercial style buyers want. Tall storage cabinets and a serving area with storage for wine and linens take the place of a pantry. The farm-style double sink is installed in an island where there is stool seating opposite.

The formal dining room and living room, which are open to each other, are accessible from two doorways off the kitchen, making it a great home for entertaining. The spacious master bedroom has a lighted tray ceiling and a large closet design by Incognito Custom Closets. The modular shelving, drawer stacks and rods can be easily adjusted and configured to suit the homeowner. The master bathroom has stone floors and separate vanities with rich wood cabinetry.

Upstairs is a 15-by-25-foot recreation room equipped with built-in storage and a place for the all-important large flat screen television.

Buyers, he said, seem more enthusiastic about multipurpose recreation rooms rather than home theaters, where watching

movies or sporting events is the only way to use the space.

"We wire and prep for telephones, Internet, surround sound and other media," David said. "The cost of that wiring is coming down."

There is another bedroom upstairs with a full bath, a half bath off the recreation room and also a smaller space that can be used for crafting, a home office or as a quiet spot for reading. A large walk-in attic is accessible from a door on the second floor. Once inside, additional storage can be accessed from a staircase.

David's family is well known in home building and commercial construction in the Memphis area. His grandfather, John C. Clark Jr., was the brother of William B. Clark, builder of the Memphis landmark Clark Tower. John C. Clark Jr. started building homes in 1942 and he was followed by his two sons, John C. Clark III, David's father and Charles (Chuck), his uncle. When David was about 12, he earned extra money by sweeping out the houses his dad and uncle built. He also learned a lot about construction being around them. After he graduated from the University of Alabama with a degree in business management and a minor in computer science, he went to work for Clark Homes for three years before starting David Clark Construction in 2002.

"I still share an office with my uncle and my dad and they are great resources for me," he said. "It's good having home building veterans to call on for help."

In addition to having good teachers and role models, David's success comes from several important traits, his father said.

"He's naturally a perfectionist who insists on quality," John C. Clark, III said. "His customers recognize him as honest and a straight shooter because he is."

His wife says her husband's family background and his own work ethic are important.

"He and I are both dedicated to making our customers happy," she said. "He understands the importance of his reputation and building quality homes. He's detail oriented and highly organized."

In this challenging market, David has shifted from a total focus on speculative homes in the \$500,000-up range to a combination of spec and custom-built houses. "I've done three custom homes in the last year and before that I did three in six years," he said.

He finds the biggest challenge in building custom homes is





PHOTOS BY STEVE ROBERTS



making sure the buyers make all of their selections for flooring, fixtures, tile, paint, etc. on time.

"I try to streamline it as much as possible by developing a schedule with a checklist outlining when materials for each phase need to be chosen," he said.

He also hired interior decorator Linda Wingo to assist buyers in the selection process, which can be overwhelming at times.

While building a custom home to conform to the EcoBUILD standards developed by Memphis Light Gas & Water Division, David discovered his speculative houses meet most of the criteria as well.

These include meeting standards for high-energy heating and air conditioning systems, double-pane low-E windows, R-15 or higher insulation in walls and R-30 or more in the attic; programmable thermostats and fluorescent lighting.

He also uses hard pipe ducts that are more energy efficient than the flexible products.

David is active in the Memphis Area Home Builders Association (MAHBA) and currently serves as secretary/treasurer of the organization, which has 1,500 member companies.

"I feel like being involved in the organization has helped me grow my business," he said. "I get a lot more out of it than what I put into it."

He twice served as chairman of the MAHBA's Vesta Home Shows and participated in the 2007 show, where his home won seven of the nine awards presented, including the coveted "People's Choice" award.

He and Laura and their 2-year-old daughter, Lydia, live in Germantown in The Laurels, a development near Houston High School, where the couple met. Although David loves outdoor sports, he now spends most of his spare time with his 2-year-old daughter, Lydia. "I love hanging out with her," he said. "She's awesome." •