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# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

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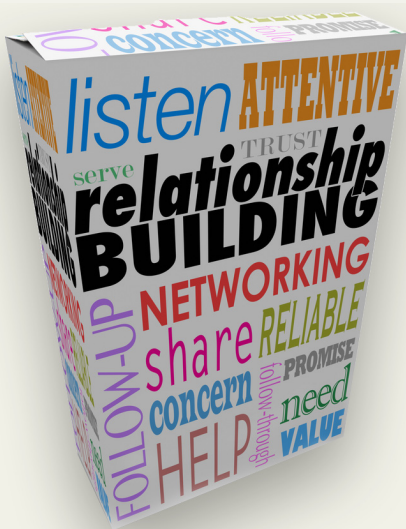
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***“The purpose of a business is to create a customer who creates customers.”***

- Shiv Singh

As you know, I have visited with a good majority of the builders and remodelers within the Houston market. Many of our finest have shared that they make it a point to stay in touch with their clients long after their client’s homes have been completed. Because of the intensive nature of the building process, the trust the custom builders and remodelers establish with their customers,

## PUBLISHER’S NOTE



**Giselle Bernard**  
Publisher/Owner

over this period of time, becomes lifelong with many. It is not unusual to hear them share that their clients end up becoming a friend or even part of the builder’s “family.” Maintaining a good customer/client relationship yields repeat business long after a client’s home has been completed. It also yields customer referrals.

The power crisis spurred by the massive winter storm in February became a water crisis as well. A good number of Houstonians had to deal with burst pipes. I am quite confident that a good number of our prestigious building professionals, as well as subcontractors, have made it their mission to take care of their past clients during this trying time.



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# Gulledge Homes Adapts to Market Changes

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

As every experienced builder knows, the housing market constantly changes. Steve Gulledge, president and owner of Gulledge Homes since 2006, is listening to the market and adapting to meet its current demands.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down much of the economy, Gulledge decided to offer a lower price-point home to expand his portfolio of speculative homes. That decision turned out to be a blessing, he said, as the national economy downsized many families' income.

While continuing to build high-end custom homes, Gulledge is also focusing on smaller homes in less expensive neighborhoods because "that's what people can afford." He's also expanding his product line to include townhomes of 1,800 sq. ft., which he's building in the Houston area.

Steve said he enjoys building in a variety of price ranges and that Gulledge Homes strives to meet the individual needs of each client. "Some clients want the best while

others are more cost-conscious. We offer the same level of customer service, whether we are accommodating those who want more extravagant homes or those who prefer simple and efficient living spaces. Our goal is to make the building process as smooth as possible for our clients and to create an end product that meets our high standards of quality.

"Building smaller homes is a lot different with new challenges. We're adjusting to a lower price point for tile and cabinets, for example, while we're also adjusting to different building codes due to the floodplain issues in Houston. But with this smaller scope of work, we can build faster and sell quicker," he stated.

At the same time Gulledge noted that continuing in the specialty custom homes business allows him to build something very different with each home because he does not limit himself to one architectural style.

The pandemic has impacted Gulledge Homes in another



way. Some of Steve's clients want to stay in place but desire a larger home, he said, because they're now working from their homes. Those clients are requesting major remodeling projects, such as additions, to give them the necessary space for home offices and home classrooms to live comfortably during these pandemic times. In some instances clients are able to stay in their homes during remodels and additions.

However, Gulledge is coping with the changes that COVID-19 has brought to his company. "My outlook of the future is very positive. I have less stress. I don't have the overhead I did because I have fewer employees, while being able to help my long-time employees find employment elsewhere when I downsized. I'm now able to give my clients more attention."

Now focused on value engineering, which starts with the foundation and framing for the smaller homes, Steve relies on his dad Jack's expertise in those areas. A retired civil engineer, Jack has been a welcome part of the construction

team, working side by side with his son. Jack is instrumental in reviewing engineering plans and inspecting site work and safety at job sites.

According to Jack, "We give the homeowners what they want, no matter what the project," noting that foundations and framing on the smaller houses are less complicated than on the larger ones.

Gulledge Homes is very much focused on its clients. "Being a small company, word-of-mouth referrals have been the foundation of the company since we started. We maintain a relationship with our clients even after the build is complete."

Even his 13-year-old son Kade agrees. "My dad cares about his customers. He's real nice, and he doesn't mess up." Their other son is 19-year-old Cole, who helps out part-time in the family business.

*Continued on page 6*



*Continued from page 5*

Nowadays Steve's schedule is a bit more flexible since he's not building as many homes, a schedule that allows him to match his time to his clients' schedules. "Being a smaller custom home builder has enabled me to meet with clients while staying on schedule."

Serving as the company's project manager, Steve is hands-on throughout the building process, including preparing a detailed weekly schedule for each project to keep subcontractors on task. "Over the years we've vetted a lot of contractors and trained them on how we do things. We use the same crews whether it's new construction or remodeling projects. We trust them, and they trust us," he explained.

He also spends half of his days on the job sites to monitor work, quality and safety and to update plans to keep projects running smoothly.

Steve has also cultivated a good relationship with his vendors, which leads to good service from them, such as receiving detailed specification sheets from his plumbing vendor quickly, and referrals of potential clients. He cited a recent client who came to Gulledge Homes upon a vendor's referral after the client's previous builder ignored the production schedule and overcharged for work.



Lorenzo Solari, who has a background in IT and is a long-time family friend, joined the team as its operations manager in mid-2020. Calling him a "great addition" to the family business, Steve said Lorenzo assists him by handling estimating and accounting, working with Buildertrend and Quick Books software and managing the business. Danielle Gullede also helps her husband by reviewing accounts and keeping him on track with appointments and emails while maintaining her personal training business, Body by D, her private fitness studio that is adjacent to the Gullede Homes office.

Obviously Gullede Homes is a family-owned and family-oriented business with a focus on the future. No matter what the housing market brings, there's no doubt Steve





Gulledge will roll with the punches and adapt to meet his clients' needs.

*You may contact Gulledge & Company at  
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# SEASON OF RENEWAL

By Linda Jennings

Explore the latest kitchen, bath and hardware products that will turn your home into a comfy retreat. From welcoming entryways to warm robe hooks and luxurious

soaking tubs these new finds are sure to add instant warmth to your dwelling. Create your calm.



Alton vanity from The Furniture Guild

## NATURAL BEAUTY

Introducing an organic element into the bathroom is a wonderful way to bring the outdoors in and create a calming atmosphere. The Furniture Guild offers a wide variety of traditional and exotic wood finishes, and we particularly love their Natural Reclaimed Oak. Made from Belgian railroad ties, this stunning finish captures the authentic look and texture of reclaimed wood with variations in grain and color. The “weathered” appearance of this finish pairs well with the brand’s popular Alton vanity and its gleaming metal accents for a dramatic style statement. The Alton vanity can be customized according to customer preference, from length, countertop and bowl designs to hardware style and metal accents.



Gessi Inciso Sensor Taps

## SYMBIOTIC BALANCE

Gessi combines cutting-edge technology with sophisticated design to create the innovative Inciso Sensor Taps. The Inciso Collection by David Rockwell is particularly notable for New York Design’s warm modern style that pairs modern style with heritage details. Their innovative touchless system is designed to promote good hygiene and improve efficiency using a sensitive infrared sensor. Water flow is activated as hands approach the tap, eliminating the need to touch a faucet lever. The Inciso Collection includes basin mixers and wall-mount models offered in a gorgeous array of finishes, from gleaming metallics to sophisticated mattes.



**Cássandra Tub from MTI Baths**

**ASYMMETRICAL SOPHISTICATION**

Create a spa-inspired bath at home with MTI’s Cássandra. This new freestanding oval tub is notable for its wider deck along one side, adding visual interest and providing a convenient ledge. It is offered as a soaker tub or an air bath version with 20 floor-installed jets and a waterproof remote control. Generously sized at 72” x 38” x 22”, the tub is crafted from MTI’s signature SculptureStone, a proprietary material that is 70% organic natural stone combined with high-performance resins. The result is a molded stone look that is solid throughout with a durable finish that is non-porous and easy to maintain. The Cássandra is available in white or biscuit with a choice of soft matte or hand-polished deep gloss finish.

**PETITE POWERHOUSE**

Created for compact spaces, the Siena Workstation from Ruvati is perfectly sized to mix cocktails at a wet bar or act as an extra prep sink in a busy kitchen. Its ingenious



**Siena Workstation Sink from Ruvati**

design with built-in accessories allows the Siena to perform multiple functions in tight spaces. The Siena includes a stainless steel colander perfect for rinsing fruit or air-drying dishes. A solid hardwood cutting board covers the entire basin to convert sink space to a handy countertop. The Siena is offered in a range of sizes from 15” to 25” with top-mount and under-mount options. Its clean lines and beautiful finish make it an excellent addition to kitchens of any size.

**WRAPPED IN WARMTH**

The Sterlingham Company Ltd Robe Rails are a must-have indulgence for the bath and beyond. The vertical rails provide gentle warmth and make smart use of wall space to bring this practical yet welcome addition to any wet area. This new collection of electric Robe Rails are offered in five distinct designs in standard sizes or custom ordered to suit any requirement. Each rail comes with two adjustable robe hooks but can accommodate additional hooks if needed. Robe Rails are comprised of 1.25” diameter tubes with concealed wall mounts available and have the option of a dimmer switch to control heat settings.

*Continued on page 11*



**The Sterlingham Company Ltd Robe Rails**

# NAHB Identifies Top Features and Design Trends for 2021 in the Wake of COVID-19

After declining for four years, a number of key trends—including the average size of the home and the number of bedrooms and bathrooms—reversed course in 2020 as a result of shifting buyer preferences in the wake of COVID-19. The average size home remained flat at 2,486 square feet, while the percentage of homes with four or more bedrooms and three or more bathrooms rose to 46 percent and 33 percent, respectively—rising closer to 2015 peaks.

“The primary reason is that COVID-19 has led a segment of home buyers to desire larger homes and to move out to the suburbs,” said Rose Quint, NAHB assistant vice president of survey research, at a press conference held during the NAHB International Builders’ Show virtual experience (IBSx).

An increased number of rooms within the same footprint means home owners are becoming more creative in how they use the space within their homes, and using features such as windows to help make these spaces feel larger.

“The space works harder rather than larger,” said Donald Ruthroff, AIA, principal at Dahlin Group Architecture Planning. “Open spaces are better defined, and spaces are flexible.”

New homes are gaining popularity as well, with 60 percent of buyers preferring new homes—the highest level since 2007. Quint attributes this increased interest in new homes to three key factors.

“One is the absolute lack of existing home inventory,” said Quint. “Two is buyers are concerned about touring other people’s homes. And last but not least, new homes are more likely to be located where buyers want to live.” She noted that outlying suburbs are the most popular geographic location, driven by increased interest among minority home buyers.

NAHB also examined preferences among buyers to help builders determine what features are most likely to resonate



## National Association of Home Builders

in the market in 2021. The top features desired include:

- Laundry rooms
- Exterior lighting
- Ceiling fans
- ENERGY STAR windows and appliances
- Patios and front porches
- Kitchen double sink
- Walk-in pantries

Outdoor spaces such as patios and front porches allow home owners to utilize more space, Ruthroff added, with the connection between indoors and outdoors continuing to become more seamless. Builders at every value level should consider how to integrate such connections into their homes, and incorporate detailing that helps to dress up these spaces.

NAHB also asked recent and prospective home buyers how COVID-19 may have impacted their housing preferences. Although the majority (67 percent) did not feel the pandemic had an impact, a quarter did feel their preferences had changed because of COVID-19, with households that have at least one teleworker and one virtual student being the most likely to feel an impact. Such households are also the most likely to desire a larger home.



**Ageless Iron Keep One-Piece Entry Set**

*Continued from page 9*

## MAKE AN ENTRANCE

One simple way to greet guests and create a welcoming entryway is to update your front door hardware. Ageless Iron introduces a new handleset that will leave a lasting impression - the Keep One-Piece Entry Set. Meticulously crafted from cast iron and hand-finished by skilled artisans for unique surface textures, this handleset has a crisp black finish that bridges both traditional as well as more rustic and contemporary designs. The entry set includes the exterior one-piece grip and plate, deadbolt cylinder, interior plate and rosette with knob or lever, matching interior deadbolt plate and thumb- turn, matching strike plates and screws, and all necessary mounting accessories.

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# Build It And They Will Come

By Mary Lynn Mabray



You never know what you will find at Design House or Fabric House. It is an adventure; but whatever it is, it will be of the highest quality, and have Connie LaFevre's personally curated, stamp of approval. If you can't find what you are looking for at Connie's, it likely doesn't exist...until Connie creates it.



Connie LaFevre, ASID, RID

“There is so much creative product and ideas in this world, it is our passion and pleasure to find, curate, and then showcase design resources for our clients and customers.”

Connie LaFevre is one of Houston's premiere interior designers, with a wealth of knowledge in her field. She also knows her way around a construction project, is well versed in architecture and details, and she is a pleasure to be around. I've known Connie, thirty years and have never, not seen a smile on her face and joy in her heart. She absolutely loves what she does, and commands the respect of her local peers. Connie has garnered national attention for her work in design magazines and trade papers.

Years ago, I recall Connie talking about finding a good source for interesting one of a kind pieces, and how difficult it was to find resources you could be proud to present to one's clients. All designers can agree on that

point. Once an idea springs into a designer's mind, it's difficult to remove. You just have to have that specific "look" for your client or the project,

Connie took to heart sourcing better and more unique sources, and slowly but surely, transitioned into a creative entrepreneur. This is where "field of dreams" analogy comes in...build it and they will come. She built it and we designers came, and are still supporting her dedication to our craft.

Connie is the proud owner of two very special showrooms that serve the design trade, Design House and Fabric House. Connie was still practicing design, full time, when the idea of serving the design trade came into being.

Before we knew it, Design House was born filled with gorgeous transitional, traditional pieces that stock the showroom floors. Unique, inventive art give the walls purpose, and unusual antiques, chandeliers, and garden pieces, fill out the inventory.

Soon after Fabric House, which specializes in upholstery fabrics, draperies, trim, wall covering and hardware opened. It is filled with competitive priced lines from around the world.

The showrooms are constantly changing, thanks to the responsive and creative staff. New pieces are brought in and create a real sense of fun and excitement for designers searching for just the right sofa, cocktail table, chandelier, art, or fabrics/wall coverings. You can spend hours in each showroom and still not see everything on the floor.

Connie's passion for excellence in interior design has been the driving force behind Design House and Fabric House. Like the saying goes, "if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life". It is evident Connie loves design as much as she loves being of service to the Houston design community through Design House and Fabric House. Connie doesn't take her creativity for granted. She shares it graciously.

Connie can be reached at Design House & DH Studios In the Houston Design Center on Old Katy Road. 713-803-4949.



#### About the Author

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# The Ultimate Water-Proof Surface

**By: Kimberly Watson**  
Global Vice President of Materials Replacement at Wilsonart

Bathroom renovations continue to be one of the top improvements made in both residential and commercial settings but can be cumbersome and costly – until now. Wilsonart, a world leader in engineered surfaces, is changing all of that with the Wetwall™ Water-Proof Wall Panel System. This revolutionary solution makes it easy and attainable for building professionals and homeowners, alike, to create spa-worthy retreats that deliver high-end style without the need for grout or disruptive demolitions.

Recently recognized by Home Builder Executive with its highest honor for innovation, Wetwall is a collection

*Reimagine bathroom design  
with revolutionary  
water-proof wall panel system*

of lightweight, waterproof panels designed specifically for use in wet area applications. Coordinated to complement popular bath materials, the collection of large format and on trend designs can be used wherever design meets water – from shower walls and bath

surrounds to accent walls and cladding. Designed to work with most shower pans and tubs, the system features tongue-and-groove panels that install easily over gypsum board, green board, fiberboard and tile with no special tools required. In most cases, contractors and DIYers can update a bath or shower in as little as 2 ½ hours.

*Continued on page 16*





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Continued from page 14

The real power of Wetwall is in its exceptional performance. Created with a patented water-proof core and antimicrobial protection that inhibits the growth of stain- and odor-causing mold and mildew, Wetwall panels are engineered to withstand everyday use with little maintenance required. The grout-free surfaces are easy to clean and feature AEON™ Enhanced Scratch & Scuff-Resistant Performance Technology, giving them superior durability.

Wetwall is not simply the future of bathroom wall technology, it's what it should have always been. It's a

thoughtful, complete wall system that offers builders and remodelers simplicity while providing homeowners with long-term performance and ease.

The Wetwall Water-Proof Wall Panel System is available online through authorized dealer partners, including Menards and Lowes. For more information, visit [www.wetwall.com](http://www.wetwall.com).

**Wilsonart** is a world-leading engineered surfaces company driven by a mission to create surfaces people love, with service you can count on, delivered by people who care. The Company manufactures and distributes High Pressure Laminate, Quartz, Solid Surface, Coordinated TFL, Edgebanding and other decorative engineered surface options for use in the office, education, healthcare, residential, hospitality, and retail markets.



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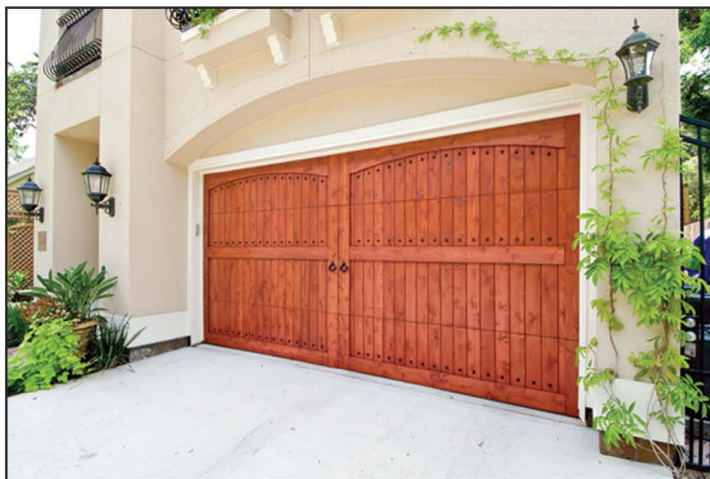
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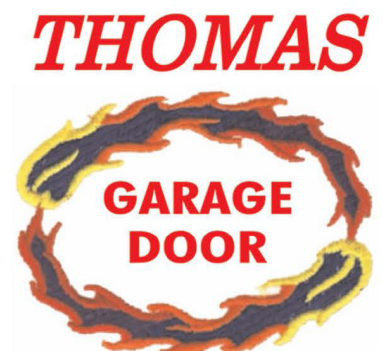
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