

THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

INSIDE SHOWCASE



PORTERFIELD
BUILDERS





Porterfield's Path to Building Career a Natural One

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Even though William Brown “Brownie” Porterfield wasn’t sure what career path he should follow after college, in hindsight his career as a custom home builder seems predestined.

As a child he would accompany his mother, Ruthie Porterfield, to open house showings in her job as a successful real estate agent with Martha Turner (now Martha Turner Sotheby’s International Realty). He would also “hang out” with his father, Marsh Porterfield, an award-winning architect of Marshall Porterfield Architects, tagging along to construction sites, which he likened to big forts.

An interest in residential construction seems to have saturated his soul, leading Brownie to launch Porterfield Builders in 2019 after gaining skills and insights while first working for a production builder and a high-end custom home builder.

Porterfield Builders specializes in custom design-build, whether it is a new construction or remodeling project. He works with a full team of designers from architects to interior designers to vendors who help clients with selections.

The “one-stop shop” approach of design-build minimizes stress for the homeowner, according to Brownie, because there is only one point of contact, creating consistent communication between the client and builder.

However, he will build a custom home in a more traditional way, too, working with plans the client provides. Some of his projects have brick, stone, stucco or slurry facades, which Porterfield can produce because of the skilled mason among his subcontractors.

Brownie admits to preferring new construction because it is easier to control the variables in the building process, but



the COVID-19 pandemic created remodeling opportunities because people were at home more than usual and realized they wanted to change features on their homes to make them more livable.

His projects are typically in the \$1-2 million range for new construction, with larger remodeling projects that may demand a full gutting of the house and/or an addition in the \$700,000 to \$1.5 million range. A bathroom or kitchen remodel may be \$30,000-\$50,000. He said he likes working on a variety of projects and can juggle two homes and several remodeling projects at one time, even though “it’s just me.”

But no matter the size of the project, Porterfield said he enjoys collaborating with clients. “Almost all of my clients have come through word-of-mouth referrals,” he noted. “They have been lawyers, oil and gas people, doctors, a funeral home director ... all walks of life.”

To minimize the clients’ stress and maximize their understanding of the building process, Brownie created an eight-step process that he includes on the company website, www.porterfieldbuilders.com. To gain a sense of the process, Step 1 is “Let Us Talk” and Step 8 is “Make Yourself at Home.”

Brownie also achieves personal satisfaction with each



stage of the building process. “I like to have projects and see finished projects. Not only do I get satisfaction from completion, but also from the stages in between, such as foundation, framing, electrical, etc.”

Porterfield Builders projects are located in River Oaks, Tanglewood, West University, Briar Grove and Memorial areas of Houston. Brownie prefers to travel east from his home in Briargrove Park (one that his dad designed and he built) to visit projects in River Oaks, West University, Bellaire, Tanglewood, Briar Grove, Memorial and then back again each day, checking on each building site’s progress and learning if the subcontractors need anything. “I like to keep in the same area so it’s easy to get from one

project to another. If I had to travel farther, I wouldn’t be able to oversee the work the way I like.”

During the next five years, Brownie would like to build some speculative homes. “I love working with clients, but I can build a spec house a lot faster because all of the selections are done up front. I currently allow two weeks in the process for paint selections. Clients have to feel comfortable with their selections, but it takes a lot more time,” he commented.

“A lot of neighborhoods have a distinct look. I’d like to keep that look but update it a little bit” with his spec homes, he added. Not every new construction has to be



Painted white. “Neighbors appreciate maintaining the look of a neighborhood.”

In the future “I can’t wait to show my son [now a toddler] my work, just as I used to go with my dad to construction sites,” Brownie said. He also envisions having his architect father design his spec homes and his realtor mother sell them. Perhaps his son will get bit by the building bug too and the company will eventually become Porterfield and Son Builders.





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