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## Bayway Homes' Skeele Passionate about Homebuilding

Bayway Homes | Houston, Texas



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By Kathy Bowen Stolz | Photography by Kathleen O. Ryan



**J**on Skeele, owner of Bayway Homes, is a man who loves his job. “I’m passionate about homebuilding. If I weren’t building homes, I’d be unhappy. I have no choice but to be good at building homes!”

The awards confirm that Bayway is good at building homes. Bayway Homes was named Bay Area Builders Association “Builder of the Year” in 2003 and then repeated the honor in 2004 and 2008. In 2011 and 2012 Best of the Bay voters chose Bayway Homes the best builder in the area.

The company motto is “Built Better,” evident in its attention to detail and application of materials that has allowed its homes to withstand hurricane-force winds without major damage.

Skeele, who lives in one of his “built better” homes, notes that Bayway Homes are more structurally sound. “When constructing a home, most builders apply plywood around exterior corners and use foam board on exterior walls. This make for a less strong home. At Bayway, we surround all of our homes with OSB sheathing, which is stronger and better at supporting the structure of a home.”

Skeele noted about the exterior of his homes, “We use 3000 psi concrete in our slabs, while most builders use 2500 psi. We fully clad our homes in OSB sheathing; other builders only install sheathing at the corners and in the middle of the home. We use six nails for shingles, while four is required. We almost exclusively use 30-year dimensional shingles instead of three-tab 25-year shingles.”

Interiors of Bayway Homes also get extra features that most builders don’t include. “We use only 42-inch upper cabinets in the kitchen for great shortage space. We utilize rounded corners on sheet rock edges for a softer feeling. In addition, we use arches and art niches to give our homes interest and appeal. We also make kitchen ceilings 9 feet high, as opposed to the standard 8 feet, which gives the kitchens a spacious look and feel. We work hard at the design so that our living spaces are useable and interesting,” Skeele said. Not only is commitment to quality, value and customer satisfaction a key factor in the company’s success, but also Skeele attributes the company’s success to two more factors. First, the company seeks out a variety



of homes styles to fit the location and/or client’s needs. “This means that we design our homes to fit the location that we are building, keeping in mind the needs of our buyers. Other builders build the same plan all over town, regardless of location or buyer need. Second, we try and follow the Golden Rule, treat



“We are successful because we are passionate about what we do...”



others as you would like others to treat you, in how we work with its clients. We live in and around where we're building. We see people around town, and we want to have a good relationship, not an adversarial one, with our homebuyers. We want to do it right. We want to be good citizens and good neighbors."

Bayway employs a unique team approach in his company, assigning a manager to each of the company's projects and then empowering that manager to handle all aspects of a project— from product lines, price point and standard features to community activities, project amenities and marketing efforts. Combined, the team managers and the owner represent more than 100 years in home building in the Houston area.

Because the team approach is working so well, Skeele said his next challenge is selecting locations for future projects. Skeele, who holds a degree in real estate and finance from the University of Texas-Austin, has 25 years' experience in the real estate business. Skeele stated, "There's a lot of dirt out there, but not everybody wants to live there. It comes down to our belief that the location is where that people want to live in."



Skeele considers Bayway a production builder of specialty products, focusing on Galveston and Harris counties. "We are becoming more of an in-fill production builder, focusing on 5- to 20-acre sites that we develop with the appropriate homes." The company offers a diverse product line, including entry-level homes, move-up homes, stilt homes and townhomes. "We specialize. Our specialization is in specialty projects. We have a geographic area we want to stay in. We will build whatever fits that location. We ask 'What's the right product for that location? Now let's





go build it.” Bayway just began building patio homes in this year in Nantucket Hideaway.

Bayway closed on 77 houses in 2012 and expects to build about 80 homes in 2013. Current developments are Berry Field in Dickinson; The Cover at Todville, Searidge and Seaside Village in Seabrook; Nantucket Hideaway in Pasadena and Steeplechase Terrace in Jersey Village. “We will be building in Summer Meadow in Pasadena in 2013,” Skeele noted. “We have sold more than 1,250 homes in 20 communities since our incorporation in 1997.”

Jon finds it difficult to claim a favorite project. “You know, I’m pretty proud of all of them. A lot of heart and soul goes into each one. We get pretty excited about each one for a different reason.”

What’s the future for Bayway Homes? Skeele said, “We are planning to stay in the Houston market and build in new communities where we feel we can add value to existing communities and provide homes that people can afford. We are successful because we are passionate about what we do and try to have fun while doing it.”

Yes, Jon Skeele loves his job. “Every day is different. Every day I learn something new. I found my passion in life as a young man, and I get to live it.”

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