

THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition
themetropolitanbuilder.com

Kuehn Learns Custom Home Building from Ground Up

Kuehn Custom Homes | Houston, Texas



Kuehn Learns Custom Home Building from Ground Up

By Kathy Bowen Stolz | Photography by Kathleen O. Ryan



Kuehn Custom Homes founder Weston Kuehn has been walking construction sites as long as he can remember. As a second-generation homebuilder, Weston grew up visiting sites with his father, learning a solid work ethic and good customer relations skills as he observed the action.

During his youth he gained practical skills, too, working in framing, masonry and electrical before graduating from Sam Houston State University with a business degree in 2001.

Weston's father neither encouraged nor discouraged his son to follow in his footsteps after college, but Weston liked the work, liked being outdoors, liked swinging a hammer. He especially liked figuring out problems. Although he

had a chance to pursue other outlets, Weston knew he always wanted to be a builder.

Soon after college, Weston was hired by a production building company. After working for that company for almost two years, Weston realized that was not the path for him. The corporation's focus was on numbers, and his focus was on the customer.

Soon Weston was invited to join his father's company, Meadowlark Homes, as a superintendent. While there, Weston absorbed many more lessons, but those that stood out above all were that integrity and quality count, that homeowners' needs and wants must be met and if you go the extra mile for the customer, the customer will go the extra mile for you. His dad's attitude was "always build each home as if the homeowner is standing right there with you," an attitude which Weston adopted.

When the recession hit, his dad Sammy retired after 35 years of building homes, prompting Weston to start Kuehn Custom Homes in 2007. It was time to implement what he was taught and intertwine that with his own

building techniques. Although he was proud to be a part of his father's company, Weston wanted his own name to brand his company, even though Kuehn is mispronounced about "99 percent of the time," Weston said. (For the record, the family pronounces the name "Cane.")

For the first few years, Weston focused on remodeling homes, typically juggling two renovation projects a month while building a couple of houses each year. Looking back, he refers to this time as setting the foundation for his company. Then, when the economy improved, he was positioned to switch his focus to custom building with remodeling projects as a side line.

As a builder who likes to figure out problems, he's built his reputation on a foundation of ingenuity and innovation. "In the custom home business, each house comes with its own set of specs; not one design or homeowner is the same. I'm always thinking, always trying to make the homes better – not only from a builder's standpoint but for the homeowner's sake as well. Homeowners don't always know exactly what they're looking at or what they really want and need. That's where I come in, transforming an idea into a functional reality."

His custom homes start at \$600,000 and 3,000 square feet and go to more than 7,500 square feet and \$1 million +. He builds in every style on the owners' lots in communities north of Houston, wherever those jobs take him.

"It all starts with putting an idea on paper. This is a crucial stage because the homeowner has his or her own ideas, and it's the architect's job to make the ideas come alive and be functional at the same time. I use Mark Todd Architects because his team has a willingness to listen to the customer. I'm also available to join in these meetings





to give my opinion of the overall design layout and do a cost analysis.”

Currently Kuehn Custom Homes has in process five projects, ranging from Montgomery to Tomball to the Spring area; Weston serves as the project manager for each home. “It is a personal goal of mine to visit each job site daily; I go where they need me, even if that means turning right back around to where I came from.”

He has excellent subcontractors working for him that know the importance of doing things to the best of their ability. “I use a lot of the same contractors that my father used. Those guys know me and know the quality that I expect. Without their willingness to want something more than mediocrity, I wouldn’t be where I am now.”

And quality counts for Kuehn Custom Homes. Weston said he does no advertising and has been very blessed not to have to advertise; his customers find him through word-of-mouth referrals. “I had a magnetic sign and Facebook page when I first started. That was it. Once I made enough money that first year, I bit the bullet and created a website. Now work comes in pretty consistently.”

Each of Kuehn’s homes is unique, but a home’s uniqueness may be “hidden” at first. Kuehn works to keep his customers involved, having them do walk-throughs at different stages – electrical, plumbing, low voltage, trim, paint and more.

“The customers start ‘seeing’ their home after the sheetrock stage. The trim stage is where things start to transform for a homeowner. A once-empty wall becomes an enclosed, detailed space of mass. The homeowner

starts to see what the house could be at this stage.

“We build all of our cabinetry on site and finish it with the finest hardware. Until this stage the customers had just seen the cabinets on a piece of paper, but when we bring them in for the walk-through, they get really involved.





“I load my houses with trim, with a lot of window treatments and crown moldings. My father used to do that. He said wood makes a house feel ‘rich.’”

In addition to the exotic woods, custom lighting and surface materials like natural stone and granite that appeal to his customers, he includes high-end appliances to take each home to the next level. To him a spec home means a spectacular home.

Customer service is important to Kuehn. “It’s fun to give my customers what they want and what they need. I go the extra mile for them. They’re the reason I have a job. Why wouldn’t I want them to be happy?”



Weston, 36, has now spent half of his life building homes. “I would say the best change during my 17 years in the building industry is the focus on energy efficiency. Products now are much different in the way that they are designed and built, with their focus on keeping homeowners’ utility bills as low as possible.

“Just the overall way that we are approaching each home’s construction is better these days. The engineering of the foundations is different; frame design and layout is so more in depth; wind shear and hold-down design is better. We are designing for longer lasting homes.”



Currently Kuehn Custom Homes is a family operation with Weston being helped by his wife Tonia, herself a former builder, who handles the paperwork behind the scenes.

During the next few years Kuehn hopes to expand his building capacity from 5-7 houses a year to as many as 12 houses each year. “I don’t want to get any bigger than that. Any bigger and you start losing sight of quality and integrity.” In addition, Kuehn has just added a commercial sector to his company.



Kuehn said the best part of building for him is the concrete stage. Concrete is the foundation of every home and it’s permanent. The existence of the rest of the home relies on the roots that it sows, he said. And so it is for this builder who poured the foundation of his company as a young man. He’s here to stay.

*You may contact Kuehn Custom Homes at
832-250-4962 or kuehnhomes@yahoo.com or
www.kuehncustomhomes.com .*