

THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition

themetropolitanbuilder.com



Bayway Homes
Celebrates 20 Years

Bayway Homes | Houston, Texas



Bayway Homes Celebrates 20 Years

By Kathy Bowen Stolz



When Jon Skeele started Bayway Homes 20 years ago, his goal was to produce well-built homes at affordable prices. After building 1,500 homes in 39 communities in the two decades since incorporating in 1997, he's more than met his goal.

"It's hard to believe I've been doing this [building homes] for 20 years," Skeele noted. "A lot of builders haven't made it this long. We provide some degree of stability in an industry that doesn't have a lot of stability."

Skeele attributes his company's longevity to three factors: The locations where it builds homes, its dedicated staff and the quality of homes it builds.

“Over time we have decided location is very important. Our business strategy has become to find a great location in areas where people want to live and then build houses that fit the surrounding neighborhoods. We create 20- to 50-lot subdivisions in areas that are already well established. We have a vision of what we want to see in a community. We transform an underutilized site into a community when we’re finished.”

Skeele said this strategy leads to a lot of different products and a lot of different price points. Buyers may be purchasing their first home or their second or their third. Focusing on the greater Clear Lake area, the

“We do suburban densification; that is, developing tracts of land of two to 20 acres in a suburban environment. It’s not in-fill, and it’s not green-fill. We are building in areas that we have developed or other developers have developed for us. We don’t sell lots to other builders; we want to control the market.”

Few other builders are focusing on these relatively small tracts of land on the bayside of Houston, according to Skeele. “We’re building in these unique communities with almost every project requiring a new set of plans. We’re very innovative when it comes to design.”



company now builds about 50-80 houses a year; half of them are available to purchase.

“We build in communities where we feel that we can provide homebuyers with a good product at a fair price. Sometimes this means we are building single family entry-level homes; other times it means we are building move-up homes or stilt homes or one- to three-story townhomes.

He said such small properties demand a labor intensive process, but it’s an approach that has proven beneficial for Bayway Homes because there’s little competition. “A company that’s too big or too small can’t do these kind of projects,” he said.

From Skeele’s perspective, Bayway turns underutilized land into community assets. His subdivisions are a form of revitalization for a community, bringing in new people



who support restaurants, retail stores, schools and more. New residents help keep a community alive or just keep growing. The subdivisions also allow current residents to stay within the community while upgrading their homes.

“Sometimes we are developing a property that’s never been built on. Other times we are repurposing a property after tearing down buildings. This approach really allows us to create communities in our vision,” he added.

Skeele cited Beach Park in LaPorte as an example of an underdeveloped property. A local real estate broker discovered a 19-lot parcel that was platted at the turn of the 19th century when the original township was being platted. The aging owner, who lives in Washington, D.C., agreed to sell the property that her family had owned for two centuries.

“It’s an interesting property. Most of the town was platted on a grid system, but not these lots. The lots are formed on two circles, which will force us to build pie-shaped houses.

“It’s an unusual architectural problem. Our goal is to create the most livable house possible for 2,200 sq. ft., a size that doesn’t lend itself to large families. We’re likely

to attract retirees or young families or people who are in tune with nature since these will be stilt homes where residents can put their boats and cars under two floors of living space. The houses will have big balconies facing Galveston Bay and the county park, where there is a boat launch.

“We’re going to start with four houses that are available for purchase. We think they’ll sell very easily once we get started.”

In League City, Bayway located a tract of land – Glenmont – that had been platted previously. An ownership problem existed, causing the land to remain vacant for more than 15 years. Eight developers attempted to complete the project but were unsuccessful.

Always looking for a challenge to take on, Skeele saw this as a prime opportunity to build a project in an excellent location surrounded by beautiful residential housing and quick access to main roads. Two and a half years after starting the process of acquiring and developing the land, Bayway broke ground on construction of its first home in Glenmont.

Beach Park and Glenmont are just two examples of how

much work Bayway's team is willing to put in for a great location. Every project done by Bayway has a similarly unique story to it, according to Skeele.

"You don't have to do much marketing if you're building where people want to live," Skeele noted.

Skeele also believes that his staff has a huge impact on the success of the business. He's proud to say that several of his 22 employees have been dedicated to Bayway for 10 to 15 years.

Bayway keeps its employees working hard and passionate about home building by implementing the importance of having fun and loving what they do with memorable team building and training events.

Almost all of Bayway employees live in the areas they build in, which makes it easy for the team to become invested in their projects and really care about what's going on in their communities, Skeele said.

In addition to choosing desirable locations and keeping an exceptional team, another reason for Bayway Homes' success is Skeele's philosophy of building quality homes. He chose "Built Better" as the company motto, and his staff practices that philosophy with every home they build. Bayway closed on 54 houses in 2015 and expects to build about 60 houses in 2016.

Skeele noted that his homes are more structurally sound than many others. Attention to detail and application of materials allows Bayway Homes to withstand hurricane-force winds without major damage.

"When constructing a home, most builders apply plywood around exterior corners and use foam board on exterior walls. At Bayway we surround all of our homes with OSB sheathing, which is stronger and better at

supporting the structure of a home."

In addition, Bayway uses 3,000 psi concrete in all of its foundations, although building codes only require 2,500 psi. "After all, a home is only as good as its foundation," Skeele said.

Homeowners notice that their houses are extremely well insulated, with the heat and air evenly distributed throughout the house.

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 storage space. We utilize rounded corners on sheetrock 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 9-10 feet high, as opposed to the standard 8 feet, which gives the kitchens a spacious look and feel. We work hard at design so that our living spaces are useable and interesting," Skeele said.

So what can prospective homebuyers expect from Bayway Homes in the next 20 years? Desirable locations, committed team members, solid construction and innovative design, the same elements that have contributed to Bayway's stability. After all, they are "Built Better."

You may contact Bayway Homes at P.O. Box 1244, Friendswood, Texas 77549 or 281-648-2425 or baywayhomes.com.

