

Summer 2007

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hot for **Outdoor Kitchens**
must-have elements to include

GET ATTENTION
key ways to add
curb appeal

great tips from
Industry Experts

 AGL Resources



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AGL Resources brings
a wealth of innovation into
every community we serve.

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New & Improved

Welcome to our new and improved publication — which includes a new name! With **EnergyWise** (formerly **Builder Wise**), we're thrilled to reveal a new look and content that broadens the scope of the magazine, serving as an even better reflection of interests. **EnergyWise** shares news from all of our markets across six states and more than 2.3 million customers. We welcome your feedback — about what you like, what you don't and what you would like to see.



Donna N. Peebles

We want to thank you for choosing natural gas as your preferred energy source. As you may or may not know, natural gas offers multiple advantages over other energy options. With natural gas appliances, homeowners save money on the initial appliance purchase, as well as when drying clothes, heating water and heating a home. Not only does natural gas save money, it saves time. It heats air and water more quickly and cooks foods more evenly. It's also energy efficient; it is colorless, odorless and the cleanest-burning of all fossil fuels, producing only water vapor and carbon dioxide when burned completely.

As you look through this issue, you'll see that natural gas not only offers instant comfort on the inside of homes but outdoors as well. We've seen a steady increase in the number of homeowners who want outdoor kitchens as part of their homes, and many builders are responding. In these pages you'll find information and advice on outdoor kitchens and more from industry experts and builders across our markets.

With this re-launch of the publication, we ask that you re-subscribe to be sure you don't miss an issue! Simply go online to www.aglresources.com/energywise or fill out the card on the front of this issue.

Thank you for your continued support,

Donna N. Peebles
Vice President, Sales and Marketing

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Curb Appeal

By Jennifer Dixon

CREATE GREAT HOME EXTERIORS TO ATTRACT BUYERS



*A distinctive pathway and planters filled with lush greenery help create an inviting exterior.
Photo courtesy of European Copper.*

Whether you're meeting someone new or seeing a house for the first time, first impressions are everything. Most prospective buyers research homes on the Internet, and if they don't like what they see, they'll quickly click to the next house.

In an Internet photo or in-person, with a few inexpensive — and some not so inexpensive options — your homes can knock that first impression right out of the park. We spoke with the experts: Landscape designer Jon Carloftis, European Copper owner and Architect Jack Arnold, Dan Schachner, host of



Natural gas lights and copper chimney pots add ambiance to a home.

Photo courtesy of European Copper.

Home & Garden Television's *Curb Appeal* and Noelle Smith of retailer Smith & Hawken on how to get buyers captivated enough to want to walk through the front door.

"A well-thought-out garden or container scheme can be the most inexpensive way to make a huge impact," says Carloftis, author of two books on gardening: *First a Garden* (Rockcastle River Trading Co., 2005) and *Beyond the Windowsill: Add Style to Your Home with the Beauty of Plants* (Cool Springs Press, 2007). Carloftis suggests a series of containers (at least three) with gorgeous, colorful flowers dotting the front of the house; something that will draw the eye up the driveway to the front door — Carloftis calls this the one, two, three step (two containers near the driveway and one next to the front door). "They should all be the same height and noticeable right when you pull up," he says. Tropicals work well in the shade, and elephant ears, for instance, thrive in the sun. Create a green landscape, and add color with the potted flowers.

Natural gas lights are another great way to add ambiance to an outdoor space. "If potential buyers see a detail like gas lighting or a copper chimney pot, they'll think it's the tip of the iceberg in terms of the quality of the home," says Arnold. "If a potential buyer sees marble on the floor, that says quality, and gas lights or copper chimney pots are an indication the house has good bones." Adds Schachner: "If you've got the budget, gas lights come in some great materials like brass, copper and wrought iron."

Also consider elements that not only look great, but ones that homeowners can enjoy once they move in. "Bringing the indoors out is a great way for people to truly enjoy their curb appeal," says Schachner. "Weather/climate permitting, you can create an eating area to dine out front and entertain guests, you can create a reading nook to enjoy a favorite book or magazine, and I've even seen playhouses for the kids out front that were very tastefully done."

A front porch can also be enticing — the perfect place for homeowners to relax and enjoy a sense of community with their neighbors. "There's something nostalgic about seeing the world go by while sitting and enjoying a drink," says Carloftis. Adds Smith: "Benches, rockers or gliders allow people to hang out on the front porch, which adds a friendly touch to the neighborhood and encourages socializing."

Just make sure you choose the furniture wisely. Carloftis always goes for a contrast — teak furniture on a stone terrace, for instance, or metal pieces on a wood deck. If you don't have much room for furniture, simply place a bench on the porch — it will still do the trick.

Another consideration is ensuring that whatever curb appeal you add complements the architecture of the home. "One of the mistakes people make is that they try to do a cottage garden for a grand house and vice versa," says Carloftis.

Curb appeal is particularly important in a soft real-estate market. "This is the time when curb appeal matters most," says Arnold. "The house with the most curb appeal is the house that sells the quickest." According to Smith, having a quality front door — the first impression someone will have of the house — not only ups the house's value, but the entire neighborhood's as well.

Exterior looks also account for 25 percent of the home-purchasing decision, according to Arnold. "Even before people leave the Realtor's office, 25 percent of the decision has been made because they know the price and have learned about the neighborhood," he says. The remaining factors — neighborhood while driving through it, curb appeal and the home's interior — also account for 25 percent each, says Arnold.

Whether you add greenery, flowers, hardscapes or natural gas amenities, the bottom line is, don't skimp on curb appeal. Enticing potential buyers to come to the front door and into the house is what can seal the deal on your sale. 🏡

Forward Thinking

By Jack McGee

AAVANTI BUILDS ENERGY-EFFICIENT AND HURRICANE-PROOF HOMES IN FLORIDA

In business for 12 years now, Aavanti Building & Development has worked hard to establish a reputation for building high-quality homes that incorporate innovative ideas well suited to Florida’s environment. Judging by one of the company’s most recent success stories, buyers are responding. The subdivision of Bimini Bay in Palm Bay, which features maintenance-free living in an island-style setting, quickly sold out.

“We offer a variety of unique housing opportunities by creating a top-notch community and then combining it with award-winning floor plans so we not only have quality development but the homes inside are of equal quality as well,” says President Mark Petroni. “Plus, using today’s innovative materials, we try and produce one of the strongest, most energy-efficient homes available today.”

The company is putting that philosophy into practice in its newest community currently nearing completion in Melbourne, Florida. Coral Key is a private gated enclave containing 32 estate-sized home sites. All homes in Coral Key will be in the South Florida/island-style architecture and loaded with high-end features. But one feature in particular is attracting a lot of attention: The homes will be hurricane resistant.

To achieve that, the builder is combining six major components into each home, including steel-reinforced concrete-block construction, metal roofs safe for 140-mph winds, concrete siding (versus stucco) to prevent water penetration, Bahamas and Colonial storm shutters, natural gas generators and a 10-year mold-prevention warranty.

“By building with these components, the whole house becomes a safe room, not just one small area,” Petroni points out. “After living through the 2004 hurricane season, I became concerned with not only getting through a storm with little or no damage, but also with being comfortable as power outages continue after a storm passed.”

Aware that post-storm outages can last days or even weeks, the builder decided to include a 15-kilowatt natural gas generator as a standard feature in each home. “This will enable our homeowners to maintain their comfort level even after a disaster,” says Petroni. “Since natural gas is always available, they won’t have to go hunting for fuel to fill the generators. They’ll be able to cook inside on the cooktop or outside on the grill, as well as enjoy a hot shower with the natural gas water heater, too.”

Six floor plans are offered in Coral Key, including a standard home site. Additional features include three-car garages, 40-inch flat screen TVs, summer kitchens and brick-paver driveways. The homes also include the highest certification for





“Since natural gas is always available, they won’t have to go hunting for fuel to fill the generators. They’ll be able to cook inside on the cooktop or outside on the grill, as well as enjoy a hot shower with the natural gas water heater, too.”

energy efficiency. “Energy efficiency is really important today,” says Petroni. “We’re trying to create a smaller carbon footprint by saving as much energy and money for our consumers as possible.”

Natural gas fits right in with Aavanti’s energy-conscious approach to home building, according to Petroni, and he takes extra measures to ensure the availability of natural gas. “We’re actually piping the house with the natural gas line whether consumers ask for it or not. But gas is being used widely here with all the appliances, including grills and pool heaters.”

Outdoor kitchens are another popular feature Aavanti has added to Coral Key. “We’ve provided a \$6,500 allowance for the customer to use however they’d like to with respect to an outdoor kitchen,” Petroni says. “Typically that includes construction of the structure itself with an area for the refrigerator, sink and a natural gas stainless steel gas grill with a double cooktop.”

Petroni sees a number of his buyers request even more elaborate outdoor kitchen areas such as outdoor fireplaces and an outdoor bar. “The u-shaped bar configuration is especially popular with a lot of people. It gives them another living area outside the house where they can entertain while the food is being prepared.”

Aavanti’s innovative approaches have garnered attention for the company and impressed prospective buyers. “We’re getting really good feedback plus a significant wow factor,” Petroni concludes. “We’re one of the first around here to use tankless water heaters, which are going to be the thing of tomorrow. People are impressed with the energy efficiency we are providing because they see we are trying to save them money in the long run.”

AAVANTI CHOOSES KEY PRODUCTS TO MAXIMIZE ENERGY USE IN THE HOME

As if building hurricane-proof houses isn’t enough, Aavanti Building & Development takes extra measures to ensure its homes provide high-efficiency, money-saving advantages for today’s energy-conscious buyers. The builder’s Coral Key subdivision includes standby generators powered by natural gas. The generators automatically supply electricity to pre-selected circuits during a utility power outage with no refueling and no extension cords needed. Pre-packaged, pre-wired systems make installation fast, easy and affordable. Certain brands and models of natural gas generators are designed to provide accurate kilowatt ratings and cover the entire standby load for the full duration of a power outage.



Since the tankless water heaters only use energy to heat water as it is needed, no energy is wasted keeping water heated in a tank.

Aavanti has also included natural gas tankless water heaters in the community. Tankless water heaters combine new technology and functionality in an innovative way to heat water. Since the tankless water heaters only use energy to heat water as it is needed, no energy is wasted keeping water heated in a tank. In addition, some tankless products are designed to provide complete control over water temperature with a precise digital controller. A touch of the fingertip can adjust the maximum water temperature up or down to the perfect comfort level. This feature also helps to prevent water from getting too hot for children.

For more information, visit www.aavantirealestate.com.



Photo courtesy of Elite Living Inc.

The Great Outdoors

By Dina Santorelli

WHAT TO INCLUDE — AND SPEND — IN AN OUTDOOR KITCHEN

Elite Living Inc. offers stainless steel sinks with inline water heaters and structures with infrared heaters.

Outdoor kitchens are hot.

While at one time they were limited to balmy locations or those of nominal weather change, such as the South or Southwest, they're starting to fire up across the country as a secondary cooking area — and as a selling feature. "As the popularity of outdoor kitchens increases, so does the return on that investment. A desirable amenity like an outdoor kitchen can convince someone to buy one home over a similar one without that feature," says Danny Lipford, host and executive producer of *Today's Homeowner with Danny Lipford*.

Amanda Lecky, author of *Outdoor Kitchens: Designs for Outdoor Kitchens, Bars and Dining Areas* (Quarry Books, 2005), offers the following checklist for homeowners deciding on the type of outdoor kitchen they need:

- How many months of each year — realistically — will I cook outdoors?
- How much space can I allocate? Should it stand alone or be connected to the house?
- Is there easy access to the indoor kitchen?
- Can I incorporate shelter from the elements?
- Do I want to winterize the space, or should some elements be portable?
- What will I cook outdoors? Are there specialty items I'd like to prepare?
- Will I entertain in the space? How large a group?



Photo courtesy of Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association.

Including multiple appliances creates a true kitchen feel in a backyard.



Photo courtesy of KitchenAid.

Incorporating counter space and storage is a key component in outdoor kitchens.

There are all kinds of outdoor kitchens, from the very basic to the luxurious. A modest outdoor dining alcove may feature only a setup with piped-in natural gas. The basic models are made from enameled steel or cast aluminum and have an output of around 40,000 BTUs or less, and many will offer convenient, push-button ignition to start grilling immediately.

Grills also are available with a variety of accessories, such as side burners, side tables and rotisseries, as well as portable work surfaces, such as a rolling cart or table. Complete a simple setup with a well-placed bench or two, or an outdoor dining table and chairs, and it's well on its way to a season of hospitable dining — all for under \$1,000.

However, if a higher budget affords the ability to step up the outdoor dining setting, perhaps spending between \$1,000 and \$3,000, think about turning the nook into more of a room. First, decide if this “room” will be attached to the home or freestanding. In most cases, an attached outdoor kitchen will be more economical, because it will simplify utility hookups and



Photo courtesy of Lynx Professional Grills.

The arrangement of the outdoor kitchen depends on your preferred workflow.

because attached kitchens are usually closer to their interior counterparts. This creates less of a need for outdoor appliances, such as a refrigerator or dishwasher.

For top-of-the-line outdoor dining, priced \$3,000 and up, the sky's the limit in terms of design possibilities — you can create a true outdoor kitchen that's professionally designed with installed professional-grade appliances. Generally, high-end natural gas grills range in price from the cost of a kitchen range to as much as 10 times more. They often are made of solid, high-gauge stainless steel, have large cooking surfaces and outputs of more than 50,000 BTUs. Premium



grills also come standard with many accessories, such as spit-fork rotisseries, stainless steel smoker boxes or hideaway features that lower the grill into an island façade.

Although a grill will most likely be the centerpiece to the outdoor kitchen, other appliance options include:

- A dishwasher: If most of the cooking will be done outdoors throughout the year, this may be a good time-saving idea. Just

choose one with a stainless steel exterior panel as well as a stainless steel tub. And find one that can accommodate oversized cookware.

- A sink with running water: If running plumbing lines from the house isn't an option, homeowners can hook a garden house to an outdoor sink.
- Garbage disposal: Hide a slide-out trash can in the cabinetry. Just be sure homeowners remember to tightly seal the trash or remove it completely at night or else nighttime critters may appear.
- A refrigerator: Most fridges have stainless steel exteriors, which is good for an outdoor setting. There are under-counter and full-size units, as well as specialty models specifically for wine, to accommodate the space requirements.

Also keep in mind that the arrangement of outdoor appliances will help streamline traffic patterns and maintain adequate elbow room. Generally, indoor kitchens utilize the “work triangle” with regard to layout. This represents a flow of traffic between the three major work centers — the primary sink, the cooking surface and refrigerator storage. And remember, “The most successful outdoor kitchens are the ones that are the most convenient to use,” says Lipford. 🍷

Hot Tips

- As the kitchen space is laid out, keep in mind that diners need at least 1 1/2 feet between the table and an obstruction, plus room to pull a chair out.
- If strong winds are common in the area, plan for an appropriate shelter, whether it's a fence or a screen. For cool nights, consider a natural gas fire pit, patio heater or chimenea.
- Choose equipment to match the homeowner's cooking style. Many natural gas grills include infrared convection burners, which help with fast, thorough cooking such as searing.
- For safety, round countertop corners, choose textured, non-slip paving and keep cooking appliances away from combustible overhangs and siding.

>>>a step above



STRONG AS OAKWOOD

Atlanta builder leads the charge in building outdoor kitchens
By Dina Santorelli

Tony Perry is known for his ability to

“bring the outside in,” as it says on his company's Web site, [\[llc.com\]\(http://llc.com\), but, conversely, his greatest achievements actually may be in bringing the indoors out.](http://www.oakwoodhomes</p></div><div data-bbox=)

As managing member of Oakwood Homes LLC, based in Woodstock, Ga., Perry has built a business on designing low-maintenance exteriors and well-designed homes for an upscale, primarily over-50 demographic. This includes using a double supply of windows to remind residents about the appeal of the outdoors and to bring them into the courtyards. “We turn all those walls into window-walls, and then you're forced out into that space,” he says. “Then we do our best to landscape it or furnish it with these natural gas appliances and things that make it part of the living environment.”

An important part of that outdoor living space is a kitchen, Perry says. “People appreciate the convenience of taking the heat and mess outside of the kitchen area sometimes, and I know they love that outdoor space,” says Perry. He adds that outdoor kitchens featuring natural gas grills offer additional convenience and efficiency. “[Natural gas] is the fuel of choice,” he says.

“People are trying to find more ways to have fun at home. Outdoor grilling is a chance to gather friends or family around and just have some real time — a chance to laugh, be romantic or be sincere; or it could just be hamburgers and hot dogs all over the grill, badminton or getting into the pool,” Perry adds.

For more information, visit www.oakwoodhomesllc.com.





Before



After

Redefining Spaces

By Kacey Cloues

RESIDENTIAL REMODELING & RENOVATIONS GIVES TENNESEANS REMODELING KNOW-HOW


Remodeling and renovation is a significant subset of today's construction market. Lou Dittmar, president of the Hamilton, Tennessee-based Residential Remodeling & Renovations, Inc., offers insight into the rewards and pitfalls of professional remodeling.

"Remodeling an existing home, especially a mature house, can have many time-consuming tasks that are not normally found in new construction and are sometimes hard to foresee," Dittmar says. Settling of the foundation over time can result in floors that aren't level and walls that aren't square, and conditions such as moisture damage may be revealed when pre-renovation demolition is undertaken. These variables, many of which don't come to light until the renovation is underway, can add to the overall cost of the project. "It's important to advise clients about the possibility of unforeseen expenses when offering an estimate on the job price," Dittmar says.

"Residential Remodeling & Renovations handles a wide range of modifications," Dittmar says. "Our clients have us gut a bathroom or a kitchen and completely rebuild with all-new appliances and fixtures. This also would include plank, laminate, tile or vinyl flooring, light fixtures, paint and any cabinetry, stone or synthetic surfaces or special features. We also have clients

who want their unfinished basement finished for theater or other entertainment-type rooms, as well as additional sleeping rooms or separate-entrance apartments."

Part of the remodeling process is increasing the comfort and usability of the home, and Dittmar recommends using natural gas whenever possible in home renovations. "What makes natural gas appealing to customers is that it is always there at their fingertips — for cooking, for washing hands on a cold winter day, for keeping warm when the power is out and for long, relaxing showers," Dittmar says.

Besides being a clean and cost-effective energy source, natural gas offers quick, reliable energy for household appliances. Federal tax credits are available to homeowners who replace appliances with more energy-efficient models. For example, a tankless water heater can bring up to \$300. "I have installed the tankless water heaters and have been impressed with their ability to provide continuous hot water for long showers or large jet tubs," Dittmar says. Natural gas appliances heat up faster and can regulate temperature extremely accurately. "Natural gas is really a time saver in so many ways," Dittmar says. 

Residential Remodeling & Renovations, Inc.



VENTING OPTIONS

Even a clean fuel like natural gas produces emissions that should be vented. Whether replacing appliances or remodeling, it's important to consider the ways in which a home's air circulation may be affected and which ventilation method best suits your design and appliances.

- **Vertical venting:** Usually a type B, or tile-lined brick chimney, it draws air from inside the house for combustion and venting. A natural draft fireplace vent uses a vertical chimney, which takes combustion products out of the fireplace by drawing them up the chimney.

- **Direct venting:** Also called sealed combustion, these systems draw air from outside the house, vent by-products outdoors and will not affect or be affected by other appliances or pressure changes inside the home. Direct-vent systems are considered the safest and most energy efficient ventilation method for gas fireplaces. They can also be used where vertical venting is not an option or where tight spaces force several appliances to rely on the same air supply.

- **Power venting:** These systems use an electric fan to assist venting of combustion gases. They

can use a long horizontal or vertical vent pipe, allowing them to be located almost anywhere.

Natural gas is one of the most efficient, cleanest and most readily available sources of energy for residences. It can provide endless hot water via a tankless water heater, maintain water and air temperature extremely accurately and isn't subject to power outages. Don't forget there are some appliances that don't have to be vented, such as a natural gas range or some of the ventless gas logs. Be sure to insist on the natural gas advantage.

Sense of Place

By Jack McGee

NEW JERSEY'S GARDEN HOMES BUILDS COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE



Garden Homes was established in 1955 by Harry and Joseph Wilf. Originally formed for the purpose of constructing single-family homes in New Jersey, the company then successfully ventured into the development of apartment complexes with Garden Communities; it eventually formed its commercial division, Garden Commercial Properties, to develop shopping centers and office buildings. Garden Homes has constructed in excess of 40,000 units of “for sale” housing.

“We have always relied on and insisted that our communities have natural gas as a fuel source,” says Loventhal.

Today the company has grown to over 500 employees. The founders’ sons, Leonard, Zygmunt and Mark, as well as the first member of the third generation, Orin Wilf, are all currently active

in the operation of the company’s privately held real-estate business.

“Not only are we a ground-up developer, but we are primarily a suburban developer,” says Scott Loventhal, director of development. “Despite the trend to go back to inner cities we still find ourselves a niche suburban developer. Our roots are in the suburbs where we’ve built a portfolio of primarily suburban garden apartments, single and multifamily communities and shopping centers.”

In addition to its suburban focus, Garden Homes occupies a unique position within the development community by maintaining a sophisticated and fully integrated system of operations, together with a full-service law firm, as well as its own insurance, advertising and construction departments and its own real-estate agency to market its properties.

“We are building communities for our future, and I think that continues to be our mission,” Loventhal says. “For every project, we look at how we can impact our collective future, and we consider a number of factors for land development. We are focusing on how we can build more environmental efficiencies into our residential units and how we can build communities and larger scale developments that are sustainable, smart-growth friendly and walkable.”



With its eye toward innovation and the environment, it's no surprise that Garden Homes favors natural gas for both its residential and commercial projects. "We have always relied on and insisted that our communities have natural gas as an energy source," says Loventhal. Garden Homes finds gas to be reliable, safe and consistent in terms of pricing. "From a cooking and home-heating perspective, it's something that people in New Jersey feel is simply more desirable than any other forms of energy," he says.

Loventhal says that the company's preference for natural gas provides something of a marketing advantage, especially given the developer's suburban focus. He cites Round Top at Sparta, one of Garden Homes' most recent communities, as a good example.

"Here we've set ourselves apart from other multifamily projects. One reason is because we are building a superior housing project, but also because many of the other

multifamily projects in that market rely on propane and electric for heating and cooking. We've clearly heard from customers in a number of instances that natural gas was one of the major reasons why they chose our community over others. They were thrilled to hear that we actually had natural gas when most other competitors had either propane or electric."

Garden Homes recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, and Loventhal points to the company's history and financial strength as two main factors that have helped to distinguish it in the marketplace and sustain its success over the years. "Despite ups and downs in the housing market, Garden Homes has not only continued to survive but to thrive. We've seen a lot of competitors come and go from this marketplace. Notwithstanding the size of our organization, we are still run like a small family business. It's rare in the home-buying industry to get both of those things." 🏡



Smart Marketing: Know Your Buyer



During its 50-year history, New Jersey's Garden Homes has learned a thing or two about marketing its products. Scott Loventhal, director of development, agreed to share a few of the company's marketing insights with energywise noting, "In recent years we've taken a more active approach to marketing in order to compete with national builders who have moved into the state."

Loventhal says that name recognition has become more important in the last 15 years, especially for residential builders. "People relate to names as opposed to individual entities that may not be familiar to them."

Traditional marketing methods — the Internet, local and regional print media — only take you so far, according to Loventhal. "We've found the best advertising is having a sales staff that knows the community. They need to embrace each person that walks through the door as a friend and understand what they are looking for."

Garden Homes encourages sales agents to speak at local community forums, offer their services at senior centers and not to rely on one-dimensional forms of advertising. "There's never an exact science to marketing," he adds. "The key is being able to react quickly to changes in the marketplace. In a slower market that may mean adjusting pricing and increasing the base-package offering for properties."

Finally, Loventhal cites natural gas as a key marketing factor. "In every brochure we put together there is a reference to natural gas. We may only list 12 key features of a home, but natural gas for heating and cooking is listed as one of those features."

For more information, visit www.gardenhomes.com.



From left: Gary Zaleski, Kathy Zaleski and Chip Iuliano, president of Area Builders of Tidewater, Inc.

Pride and Joy

Kacey Cloues

VIRGINIA HOMEOWNERS LOVE THEIR DREAM HOME, BUILT BY AREA BUILDERS OF TIDEWATER, INC.

With two grown children living on their own, a year and a half ago Kathy and Gary Zaleski began to think about where they'd like to live in their retirement years. When they discovered the East Beach community on the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia, they knew that's where they wanted to settle. Lots were selling fast, so they felt compelled to act quickly, even though they knew they wouldn't be able to live there full time for several years. After purchasing the lot, their real-estate agent introduced them to Chip Iuliano, and the Zaleskis knew immediately he was the right builder for their dream home.

Designed according to the tenets of New Urbanism, the master plan of East Beach centers around the connectivity between the built environment and the natural landscape and the importance of the human element in the scale of the buildings and the scope of the development. Homes are organized along tree-shaded streets that are specifically geared toward pedestrian traffic. Garages are tucked out of sight behind the houses, allowing views of the streetscape from generous front porches. A variety of parks provide ample greenspace, and the beach, community clubhouse and pool and marina are only a short walk away. "When I say this is a 'community,' I mean it's really a community," Kathy says. "It has everything you could need all in one place."

The construction in East Beach is carefully monitored for quality of craftsmanship and aesthetics, and the list of accepted builders is limited to 20. Chip Iuliano is president of Area Builders of Tidewater, Inc., one of the companies selected for the exclusive East Beach Builders Guild. Iuliano, a Hampton Roads native, has worked in residential construction in Virginia's southeastern coastal region for over 25 years. Since 1992 he has been an active member of the Tidewater Builders Association, a nonprofit trade organization representing businesses in the shelter industry with the goal of promoting excellence and professionalism throughout the building and housing arenas. "Chip surrounds himself with highly qualified people," Kathy says. "We felt very comfortable with everyone he recommended to us throughout the construction process."



Another of Iuliano's signature characteristics is his insistence on being involved in every aspect of the project from architectural design to interior decorating and landscaping. But don't mistake this omnipresence for imperiousness Kathy warns. "He let us pick out all the details of the house from the kitchen cabinets right down to the faucets and doorknobs. If we decided we didn't want a doorway in a certain place, Chip said 'fine, there won't be a door there.' If we wanted to change little architectural details here and there, he went with it," she says. "Basically, Chip's approach was 'if that's what you want, here's how we can make it happen.'"

"I look at my business as being customer driven," Iuliano says. "People are making a very large investment in their home, and we try to accommodate their wants whenever we can. When something is important to my clients it becomes important to my team. We try to let that be known to our clients and want them to feel we are listening to them and trying to deliver the product they are looking for."

But perhaps the best part, Kathy says, was Iuliano's ability to take their individual suggestions and meld them into a cohesive design scheme. "He paid great attention to the smallest details without ever losing sight of the larger picture, of how everything was fitting together throughout the house as a whole," she says. "Chip was constantly aware of not just how the house would look but also how it would function. He really wanted every aspect of it to fit our needs."

"I have a lot of support that makes all the difference," says Iuliano. "From my field superintendents to my office staff and interior decorator — everyone is there to help clients with their wants and needs."

One of those needs came to light late in the construction process. "We absolutely did not want to have any grass," Kathy says. "We didn't want the hassle of maintaining a yard, especially since we won't be living in the house full time for another few years." Iuliano had already laid out a landscape plan complete with a lawn, but when presented with the no-grass request, Kathy says he took it all in stride. "He simply said, 'OK, we'll go back to the drawing board. No grass!'" A few days later the grounds crew was at work creating a no-maintenance landscape around the huge old live oak tree in the front yard.

Another point that the Zaleskis were adamant about was using natural gas in the house. "We definitely wanted [natural] gas," Kathy says. "In fact, I insisted on it." In addition to a gas range in the kitchen, Iuliano installed gas heating and a Rinnai tankless water heater. He also ran a line out to the back courtyard where Kathy and Gary plan to have a gas grill. Kathy says she was well aware of the advantages of



"We definitely wanted [natural] gas," Kathy says. "In fact, I insisted on it." In addition to a gas range in the kitchen, Iuliano installed gas heating and a Rinnai tankless water heater. He also ran a line out to the back courtyard where Kathy and Gary plan to have a gas grill.

using natural gas for cooking but was pleasantly surprised by the performance of the tankless water heater. "Gary loves to take long showers," she says. "And the first time he used the shower here he stayed in forever, and it never ran cold!" Plus, she points out, the water heats up quickly, eliminating the need to let the faucet run for a few minutes just to get enough hot water to wash your hands.

Overall, the Zaleskis agree that the entire process of building their coastal dream home went far smoother than they had ever anticipated, especially considering they live over three hours away from the job site. And they are quick to credit Iuliano with a huge part of the success. "His attentiveness to detail is evident in the most amazing ways. Even the things we don't see — like the incredibly quiet plumbing and the extra insulation to soundproof the house — are completely high quality. He didn't cut any corners," Kathy says. They get down to East Beach about once a month, spending the weekend relaxing at the beach — Kathy with a book and Gary with a fishing pole; they even hosted the entire family there last Christmas. Kathy sums up the home-building experience succinctly. "Chip gently guided us through the whole process, and we ended up with a home we absolutely love."

For more information, visit www.abtcustomhomes.com.

AGL Resources Presidential Awards

Having a great company starts with great employees. The AGL Resources Marketing Department recognized its best and brightest with its annual Presidential Awards.

Honored with the Presidential Awards were Carl Nielsen, Mid-Atlantic Operations, and Thomas Parks, Southern Operations. Hank Linginfelter, senior vice president, Mid-Atlantic Operations, described Nielsen as “an expert in the natural gas industry.” Suzanne Sitherwood, senior vice president, Southern Operations, noted Parks’ “incredible” contributions: He reached 266 percent of his 2006 commercial meter goal.

AGL Resources Vice President Donna Peeples also introduced a special award honoring a “lifetime of achievement.” Recipients of the first Lifetime Achievement Awards were Account Executives Lamar Crump, Sherrie Blanton and Joe Simons. In presenting the lifetime awards, President and CEO John Somerhalder noted the honorees had been a critical part of unprecedented change in the corporation.



Top row, from left: Don Carter, Robert Duwall, Hank Linginfelter, Suzanne Sitherwood, Wendell Dallas, Windell Peters, Steve Lindsey, Frank Gray, Donna Peeples, David Harvey. Middle row, from left: Eric Martinez, Joseph Simons, Joseph Crilly, Carl Nielsen, Walter Clark, Rick Ellis, Thomas Parks, Rick Lonn, Andrea Papageorge, Lamar Crump. Front row, from left: Pauline Bradford, Denise MacQuirk, Ann Massey, Robert Williams, Sherrie Blanton, Mark Clay. (Not pictured: Geri Boyes)

2006 Sales & Marketing Award Winners

Lifetime Achievement Award

Sherrie Blanton (Atlanta Gas Light)
Lamar Crump (AGL Resources)
Joseph Simons (Virginia Natural Gas)

Presidential Award

Carl Nielsen (Mid Atlantic Operations)
Thomas Parks (Southern Operations)

Sales Award of Excellence

Geri Boyes (Florida City Gas)
Pauline Bradford (Virginia Natural Gas)
Mark Clay (Atlanta Gas Light/
Chattanooga Gas)
Denise MacQuirk (Elizabethtown Gas)

Construction Award of Excellence

Walter Clark (Florida City Gas)
Joseph Crilly, Jr. (Elizabethtown Gas)
Rick Ellis (Atlanta Gas Light/
Chattanooga Gas)
Robert Williams (Virginia Natural Gas)

Customer Service Award of Excellence

Ann Massey (AGL Resources)

Marketing Partners Award of Excellence

Frank Gray (Atlanta Gas Light)
David Harvey (Atlanta Gas Light)
Rick Lonn (AGL Resources)
Andrea Papageorge (AGL Resources)
Windell Peters (AGL Resources)



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NEW TRUCKS ARRIVING IN NEIGHBORHOODS SOON

If you haven't yet, you will soon see them in neighborhoods near you — safer, more efficient and more identifiable company trucks in each of AGL Resources' natural gas utilities. The new Toyota Tacoma trucks allow the AGL Resources workforce to perform more efficiently since custom-designed storage results in less time at the warehouse and more time serving customers. Safety was also a key factor in delivering a new fleet of vehicles. Each truck includes DriveCam for added safety, and the smaller size provides greater visibility.

Finally, the trucks are also more recognizable on the road, courtesy of a custom paint job that reinforces the corporate identity of all the natural gas utilities that comprise AGL Resources. The blue and green ribbons have dual meanings, representing key aspects of both natural gas as an energy choice and of the AGL Resources' utility that serves

your community. The blue ribbon symbolizes the reliability of natural gas and devoted service to the community, as AGL Resources

has served some markets for more than 150 years. The green ribbon signifies the environmental friendliness of natural gas as the cleanest-burning fossil fuel, and also the growth of the AGL Resources' family of utilities.

The new trucks are already on the road in Tennessee, Georgia and Virginia and will soon be appearing in New Jersey (late 2007) and Florida (2008).



Trucks with increased efficiency and identity are being deployed to all AGL Resources' markets.

The recent condo boom in urban markets has ushered in a fresh wave of in-town, high-rise dwellers. No longer reserved for starving artists and college students willing to inhabit drafty old manufacturing buildings for a cheap price, the new urban lifestyle, complete with well-appointed lofts and resort-style condominiums, is luring young professionals, growing families, empty-nesters and retirees. Tivoli Properties, Inc., an Atlanta-based real-estate development company, has its finger on the pulse of the Southeast's rapidly growing condo market.

Going Up

By Kacey Cloues

TIVOLI PROPERTIES IN ATLANTA OFFERS HIGH-RISE CONDOS WITH VERTICAL MAINS



Established in 2004, Tivoli focuses on developing upscale multifamily real estate in vibrant downtown neighborhoods around the Southeast. What sets Tivoli apart is its savvy foresight in anticipating market trends and adapting design elements to suit its clientele's emerging needs.



Natural gas Viking stoves are a key feature offered in the Mezzo development.

Most importantly, Tivoli recognizes the significance of creating atmosphere in an in-town living environment and strives to infuse each of its developments with a sense of identity and

a strong connection to the community.

One of Tivoli's newest Atlanta developments, Mezzo, epitomizes the essence of next-generation multifamily housing — the boutique condo. Limited to an exclusive 94 units, this 20-story condominium combines the luxuries of an opulent resort and the sweeping views of an urban high-rise with the personality of a close-knit neighborhood. John Jones, Tivoli's executive vice president, says the most appealing aspect of the boutique-condo concept is the unique feeling of intimacy

it fosters among residents. "Our condo owners are paying \$400,000 plus for a condominium with outstanding amenities like a eucalyptus steam room, dry sauna, massage room, refreshing pool and outdoor summer kitchen with European-style dining. It's nice to be able to enjoy those types of amenities with an intimate group," he explains. Another key aspect of Tivoli's development approach is the ability to create the distinctive lifestyle sought by its clientele. The company believes that quality of life involves more than an impressive street address, and its insistence on the highest caliber craftsmanship and the finest features and finishes backs up this assertion. The decision to incorporate natural gas into the building is a perfect example. Installing a vertical main in the condo has allowed Tivoli the opportunity to offer residents the use of natural gas in their homes, an option that is not always available to high-rise dwellers. Jones says that Tivoli already has many buyers that are thrilled to have a full-service Viking natural gas range at Mezzo.

All units are equipped with natural gas water heaters, and gas also runs the grill in the communal gathering space and heats the residents' swimming pool. In addition, select units feature private outdoor gas fireplaces. "This is the first high-rise project Tivoli has developed that uses gas," Jones says. He feels the benefits of being able to offer home buyers a choice in the type of energy they use is crucial to gaining an edge in Atlanta's competitive in-town condo market.

For more information, visit www.tivoli-properties.com.



In the Market

By Jennifer Dixon

HOW NATURAL GAS HELPS REALTORS SELL HOMES



A natural gas Wolf stove is the centerpiece of this kitchen.

Photo courtesy of Real Images.

It's no secret that home buyers love natural gas. Ro Preisinger, an associate broker with Coldwell Banker's Sandy Springs branch near Atlanta, uses natural gas as a sales tool for the new-construction homes she markets. Preisinger works with small builders, marketing and selling their properties (anywhere from five to 20 per neighborhood), ranging from \$150,000-\$750,000 per home.

One builder she's currently working with on homes in the \$250,000 range includes Rinnai tankless water heaters as a standard feature. Not only will the water heater save a family of four \$350 per year on its water bill, President Bush recently instituted a \$300 tax credit to families installing these heaters. "It's a natural gas water heater, but it's only in use when the water is on," explains Preisinger. "You're not paying to constantly heat a tank of water." Potential buyers see the credit and savings as a bonus, knowing that builders are saving them money while being environmentally aware in the process. These savings in energy costs can then go toward other expenses, such as mortgage payments; these energy enhancements can also increase a home's market value. According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Home Builders, homes with natural gas command a four percent price premium over similar homes without it.

Another natural gas feature Preisinger often markets is heat. Natural gas heat doesn't have to work around the clock but is there when you need it. Unlike electric heat, natural gas furnaces can warm a home in a matter of minutes, which means the furnace isn't running all day, wasting energy and money. "With gas, you can turn the heat way down, to 58 degrees during the day," says Preisinger. "With electricity, if you move it up and down it messes the whole system up. That's always been its fault."

Preisinger's greatest asset to buyers is that she knows her product. "Any time I'm showing a subdivision or a model home, I gather all of the information about natural gas and the gas products in the home(s) and share it with my potential buyers," she says.



ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION

Ann Massey takes natural gas and energy-efficiency education seriously. So seriously, in fact, that she has dedicated much of her 20-year career at AGL Resources to it. Realtors receive three hours of continuing education credit for her course, "It Takes Energy to Sell a Home," in which she extols the benefits of insulation, sealing materials, efficient windows and doors and natural gas.

Certified in Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia and Florida, Massey hopes her course informs Realtors how to show home buyers the benefits of natural gas in the home. "It's convenient, it's reliable, it's safe and it's the cleanest-burning fossil fuel available today," says Massey, coordinator, industry education. Natural gas' ever-expanding uses include heating, cooking, fireplace warmth, water heating, clothes drying, space heating, lighting, grilling, pool heaters, patio heaters and fire pits. Massey has also seen a rise in the popularity of natural gas generators in storm-ravaged Florida and other areas prone to outages.

In addition to the course, Massey works with builders and their sales agents to help them market their homes for energy efficiency. She also studies communities to see what they're doing in the area and presents the information to Realtors. She gives classes in the community clubhouse and provides tours of the houses. This helps Realtors point out energy-efficient amenities to prospective buyers.

For more details or to schedule a Realtor course, contact Ann Massey at 404.584.3221 or acmassey@aglresources.com.



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