

Advertising Supplement to **The Post and Courier**
SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

real estate



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CLINE HOMES/PROVIDED

A home built by Cline Homes is a “modern farmhouse” design with white board exterior, black accents, a metal roof and large porch.

Home Plans for 2020

Open and relaxed with an emphasis on smart storage



HOMES BY DICKERSON/PROVIDED

The “Drayton” model is one of many in the Homes by Dickerson plan book offered to clients in neighborhoods throughout the Carolinas.

BY BRIGITTE SURETTE

According to a January 2020 press release from the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, residential sales are up.

Specifically, a 7.9 percent increase — nationwide — of new single-family houses in January (764,000) from the December rate of 708,000. This increase is 18.6 percent above the January 2019 estimate of 644,000.

According to that same press release, the median sales price of new homes, nationwide, sold in January 2020 was \$348,000 and the average sales price was \$402,300. The “seasonally adjusted estimate of new houses for sale at the end of January was \$324,000,” which means a

“One of the most rewarding things is being able to create a home that’s fits a client’s life.”

Jeff Cline

Owner and VP of Cline Homes

supply of 5.1 months at the current sales rate.

According to the latest Charleston Trident Association of Realtors’ Local Market Update, new single-family listings in Charleston county have realized a drop with a year-to-date decrease of 6.7 percent. Yet, multi-family dwellings, condo and townhomes realized a 4.8

percent increase year to date. There are variables affecting the market currently, and as news emerges regarding those variables, local and market reports will undoubtedly change.



Cline



Bailey



Wegner

National trends

According to the National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) website, the 2020 trends in home building include a focus on energy efficiency, open design and multi-family flex spaces. Those flex spaces add "increased functionality." The trend to make use of a space for more than one purpose is not only efficient, but appears to be here to stay — a positive trend to waste less, repurpose more and make less of an impact on the environment.

What's more is both first-time homebuyers and repeat buyers

are okay with smaller spaces, but they want high-quality finishes and features.

According to the NAHB, there has been a four-year downward trend that has led to the smallest average home size since 2011 — the average being around 2,500 square feet. There are also fewer bedrooms, according to the NAHB's studies — "The percentage of homes incorporating four-plus bedrooms, three-plus full bathrooms and three-plus car garages have also dropped to levels not seen since 2012."

To make the American Dream more attainable for everyone, builders and designers are looking toward multifamily projects — that feel more like a single-family dwelling. As CTAR's latest report indicates, it's a trend that's taking a foothold in the Lowcountry as well.

Local trends

I reached out to three local builders — Jeff Cline, owner and VP of Cline Homes, Curt Wegner, president of Curtis Daniel Homes and Jonathan Bailey, Charleston Division President of Homes by Dickerson. They weighed in about the future of home building, how new construction has changed and what buyers want in both custom and spec home single family building plans.



PHOTOS BY CURTIS DANIEL HOMES/PROVIDED

Indoor spaces that open onto large outdoor spaces are one of the primary requests among buyers.



This custom home built by Curtis Daniel Homes has a large living area with an outdoor kitchen space. All of the outdoor area opens to the main entertaining spaces inside.

Are homes getting bigger or smaller?

"More than anything people are trying to 'right size' their homes," said Wegner. "They don't want to sacrifice livability to keep costs down, but they don't want a house with rooms they don't use or rooms that are larger than necessary. Most clients start with a square footage goal and adjust their goal once a floor plan comes together."

Wegner said that his clients (which

include Daniel Island and Grassy Creek and Shell Landing in Mount Pleasant and soon, in Hibben Creek in Mount Pleasant) typically adjust their plans as floor plans come together.

"They want a home that fits their individual wants and needs according to their situation," he said.

Bailey is a custom home builder and Division President of the Charleston division of Homes by Dickerson, a Raleigh-based homebuilder with com-



HOMES BY DICKERSON/PROVIDED

Builders and designers create inventive spaces for home offices that often times are located in flex spaces that serve other purposes.

munities in the Carolinas. He agreed that he's seeing a trend toward somewhat smaller homes. Their homes are currently in the Nexton master-planned community in Summerville, and they will soon be breaking ground in Riverside at Carolina Park in Mount Pleasant.

"We are seeing homes sizes trend down," he said. "Right-sizing means simplifying clients' everyday living."

What's new in spaces that buyers want as opposed to five years ago? Are there more designated spaces for certain activities instead of free-flowing or open spaces?

"Buyers are still seeking open floor plans," Cline said. "They are getting away from formal rooms such as living rooms or formal dining rooms. They look for certain dedicated spaces for organization and storage — mudrooms, larger pantries, office space or just larger storage closets. I don't believe homes are necessarily getting smaller, we just seem to be using some of the spaces within differently."

Cline's builds include homes in Awendaw Village, Daniel Island and Carolina Park.

Bailey noted that there have been some definite changes from five years ago. "Where we once saw owner's entries and

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PLANS, from E9

lockers as a nice add-on, we now see this as a must-have. There's a big demand for these kinds of flex spaces, used in kid's play areas, office spaces and extra guest spaces."

Are kitchens and baths still center stage? Most buyers seem to find these spaces as the most important hubs in the home and they are the most renovated as well. Are these spaces getting larger or more compact?

"Kitchens and baths are still center stage when it comes to a home's 'wow' factor," Bailey said. "Kitchens remain the central hub of the home. A few upgrades to these spaces go a long way."

Cline said his designers tell him these spaces are a high priority for buyers.

"Kitchens are growing in size because of bigger appliances and bigger islands. The owner's bathroom continues to be a primary focus with the continuing trend of expanded showers in lieu of a tub which seems to have become more of a decorative feature when included."

How do you work with clients to find the best plan? Do you have a plan and/or range of plans that are specific to a neighborhood or region? Do you tweak those plans or is the footprint "as is?"

"The best way to find the right plan for a client is to ask the right questions," Cline said. "How do they want to use their home? Some can have limitations by neighborhood or area but we customize any of our plans to meet a buyer's needs, as long as it meets the requirements of the neighborhood we are building in. One of the most rewarding things is being able to create a home that fits a client's life. That could be as simple as a bump in the dining room to fit grandma's antique hutch, but it's something that makes a big difference to a client."

Bailey said that over the course of several years, Homes by Dickerson has built a substantial plan book through consulting and working with local architects and designers.

"As a custom builder, we can modify and enhance floorplans to meet their specific needs," he said. "Our customers tend to have a conceptual floorplan that we have built before that they love, but they want to personalize it. We do that, make those customizations, give them up-front



PHOTOS BY CLINE HOMES/PROVIDED

This bathroom makes the free-standing tub a decorative focal point and also implements one of buyers' most requested features — a large shower.



Buyers want roomy kitchens with large islands that serve as family gathering places, casual dining spots and flex spaces, with high quality finishes.

cost impacts — without significant design costs involved."

Bailey added that clients want sustainable products. "One of the items that buyers ask us about most is our ZIP system, a sheathing system that streamlines weatherization with an integrated air and water resistive barrier. We don't use traditional house wrap and when you see one of our homes under construction,

the green ZIP system house on the street certainly draws attention."

Any new ways in which homes plans are changing? Are exteriors in the Lowcountry changing?

"We continue to see our customers seeking better ways to integrate their out-

Modern farmhouse rules supreme

■ Modern farmhouse design became popular within the last decade.

■ According to Rockefeller Kempel Architects, "an interpretation of farmhouse style in Albany, New York seems as appropriate as in Charleston, South Carolina."

■ The design embraces casual indoor and outdoor lifestyles with clean-lines and timeless qualities—a neutral palette indoors, white board and batten siding, black period lighting, black metal hardware, porches and large windows and doors to connect exterior and interior spaces.

■ The 21st century version of the modern farmhouse includes the use of barn-style doors and wide-plank wood flooring. Exteriors feature steep roof pitches and metal roofs. Pared down and relaxed and a combination of old and new are hallmarks of modern farmhouse designs.

— Source: NAHB and Architectural Designs

door living spaces with interiors," Cline said. "We get requests for large pane sliding glass doors and folding doors to connect the family room with the porch. Clients also want the foundation lowered, thus the porch floors to get rid of railings and too many stairs so that these exterior porches are closer and more connected to patio and yard spaces."

Wegner agreed. "More and more people design their homes to bring the outdoors in with these types of doors — either folding glass or 'lift and slide' patio doors. Not only do they allow for superb indoor and outdoor living, they also allow for a great deal of natural light into the home."

Bailey said there are areas in which home plans are changing, but some tried-and-true designs that have been around for a few years aren't going anywhere.

"Larger porches and outdoor living spaces are a high priority," Bailey said. "Maximizing the indoor and outdoor spaces with these types of large panel and glassed doors allow a screened-in porch to be part of living and entertaining spaces. In interiors, we're seeing quite a mix — from mid-century, farmhouse and coastal cottages. But, exteriors we still see a pretty consistent Lowcountry style with simple architecture. The consistency is one of the things that makes Charleston such a special place."

Contact **Brigitte Surette** at bsurette@postandcourier.com.