

The Columbus Dispatch

WWW.DISPATCH.COM

SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 2013

Designers at parade step out a little bit

By *Jim Weiker*

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

When architects and builders replaced homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, they offered a variety of models.

They found that residents bypassed the contemporary designs in favor of homes that looked like the ones destroyed.

The story illustrates that people like what they know.

As much as some observers—count me among them—would like to see more daring home designs, the fact is that most homebuyers want something that bears a resemblance to the home in which their parents or grandparents grew up.

That's not lost on builders or developers, as the current Parade of Homes demonstrates.

The parade, in Jerome Village in Union County, illustrates both the opportunities and challenges of imposing a traditional architectural vision on a new neighborhood.

The Jerome Village website is rich with images of beautiful and impeccable replicas of Queen Annes, Craftsmans, Georgians and other architectural styles.

But the neighborhood's homes suggest, rather than mimic, the real thing.

Indeed, some of the homes on the parade fit into none of the nine architectural styles that Jerome Village planned to allow.

When Doug Annette, a partner in New England Homes, submitted his design, with its painted white stone exterior and galvanized steel gutters, he wasn't sure what to call it. Neither were the folks at Nationwide Realty Investors, who developed Jerome Village.

"They said, 'We can't quite figure out where it fits, but we're going to allow it in because it's cool,'" Annette recalled.

Victorian farmhouse was added to the approved styles to allow the New England home and a few others.



Union County's Jerome Village illustrates both the opportunities and challenges of imposing a traditional architectural vision on a new neighborhood.

Even though the architectural styles might be loose, Annette and other builders commend Jerome Village for trying something a bit different.

Annette sees Jerome Village as a pleasing alternative to the "stucco-box neighborhoods" of central Ohio.

Mark Braunsdorf, owner of Compass Homes, also applauded Nationwide for promoting something other than "your ordinary Columbus mishmash."

Braunsdorf became so intrigued by the idea of historical architecture communities that he organized a trip with builders and Nationwide representatives to Westhaven, a Tennessee neighborhood that relies on historical home guidelines.

There are similar well-known communities such as Seaside and Celebration in Florida, but you needn't leave central Ohio to find a prime example.

New Albany famously adheres to an architectural style. But as the New Albany example illustrates, it takes money to replicate architectural styles.

No \$250,000 “Colonial,” no matter how skilled the builder, is going to resemble anything found in Williamsburg, Va.

Jerome Village has wrestled with the same issue.

Architectural guidelines were loosely applied to the earliest stages of the community, where homes start in the mid-\$200,000s, but will be more rigorously applied to the more expensive parts of the community.

“In the lower-cost homes, there’s more flexibility in the design and detail,” said Nationwide Realty spokeswoman Tina Guegold. “As the

size of the lots and cost of homes increase, you’ll see the designs will be held more true to style and a higher level of detail in the homes.”

Builders, who traditionally resist such demands, might welcome them as a way of maintaining value in the community.

Tim Shear, vice president of Coppertree Homes, which built perhaps the most architecturally authentic home in the parade, an Italianate model, summed it up this way: “You don’t put a little trim in a house and call it Victorian.” ■
