

Michael Dike of Village Homes

Fort Worth builder wears the many hats required for this industry



by Jennifer McDermitt

When most people start a business in their 20s, they are somewhat naïve about the way things will be. Although Michael Dike of Village Homes may not have foreseen all the challenges in this industry, he did understand that if you surround yourself with good people, treat your customers well and face those industry challenges head on, you will come out on top.

“Builders have to wear many hats,” said Dike. “One must be strong on the financial and cash management side in addition to managing quality and promoting yourself. However, this challenge is one of the things I love about home building. It takes a team (around here we say it takes a Village) to bring it all together.”



loved walking the jobsite and seeing the changes from week to week. And, I still remember the excitement of moving into our brand new home.” Today, Dike says that memory comes back to him when he sees the excitement of his clients build as they see their new homes take shape.

Dike started working out of college for Newmark Homes in Austin in 1993 and worked there for three years as a project manager. “I was fortunate to have the influence of my managers, Brian Shields and Kyndel Bennett, who taught me the importance of being on site every day and finishing homes to 100 percent completion,” he said. “That final punch list is the toughest but makes the biggest difference.” Dike says that at Village Homes, they use a system of final walks and sign offs with clients to ensure that their homes are complete at move in.

Additionally, Brian instilled in him the attitude that there are no problems; just opportunities. “In construction, there are always situations that don’t go as planned,” he said. “When that happens, there is a real opportunity to shine in how we deal with these challenging situations. This business will chew you up if you are running around putting out fires all of the time.”

Early Interest in Building

Dike’s love of the industry was sparked at a very early age. “When I was 13, my parents built a new home for our family,” he explained. “I



Partnership Turns a Vision Into a Reality

Dike started Village Homes in 1996 with partners Jim Harris, who was an experienced developer, and Rob Sell. “I knew I did not have all of the skills needed, especially at age 25, so I was fortunate to partner up with people whose skills complemented mine. Jim Harris and I are still partners today, and his experience has been a key ingredient to our success over the years.”

Since 1996, Dike and Harris have built over 350 homes in the \$300,000 to \$1-million-dollar price point as well as numerous luxury

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townhomes in the Fort Worth area. Land development is also a component of the business, as Village Home strives to creatively build neighborhoods on infill sites.

Village Homes sets itself apart from its competition with its design and service. On the service side, they strive to make the building process easy and fun. “We don’t want the process to drag out, so we work to get our clients the information they need to make decisions,” said Dike. “Plus, we are a design build firm, which allows us to work closely with our clients to get the design they want within their budget.”

In 2008, Village Homes built Fort Worth’s first LEED Certified home. The home allowed the company to try many different green building techniques, some of which they have since integrated into all of its homes. In addition, Village Homes has built two Southern Living Idea Homes, and this year, Dike participated in the Greater Fort Worth Builders Association’s (GFWBA) Kaleidoscope of Homes.

Blending the Old with the New

Dike and Harris’ initial vision for Village Homes, which continues today, was to build unique custom homes that marry timeless architectural styles found in many older pre-WW2 neighborhoods with modern amenities and smart, functional floor plans.



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"In the mid 90s, there was a big backlash against the cookie-cutter styles found in many neighborhoods," he said. "Our goal has always been to build homes that look like the charming homes in desirable older neighborhoods without the small spaces, drafty interiors, and maintenance of older homes." Village Homes offers an alternative for those who want the charm and location of an older home with the functionality and energy efficiency of a new home.

"Most of our clients are frustrated old home shoppers who could not find what they wanted in an existing home and see the value of a brand new home. A new home allows them to design and select finishes to suit their lifestyle while enjoying energy efficiency and warranties," said Dike.

A large part of their business also comes from the development of new neighborhoods, where they blend seamlessly with the older, desirable neighborhoods by mixing in a diversity of architectural home styles, narrower streets and street trees.

It's All About Relationships

Dike says that from day one, his company has been involved with the GFWBA. He has served on the local board and recently finished the Parade of Homes. "In our current environment, things are changing very quickly," he noted. "Being involved with the BA allows us to stay abreast of these changes and make sense of what's going on at the local, state, and national level."



While Dike graduated from the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in business, he says that, these days, his education comes from his fellow Builder 20 members. Builder 20 is a NAHB-sponsored program where builders from around the country share ideas and support each other, meeting twice a year and focusing on education.

Dike credits his success to support from his family, creative solutions to challenges and strong relationships with stakeholders. Most of all, Dike credits the professionals on his team, especially the sales team led by Janet Bishop and



construction team led by Dale Proctor and Mike Griggs.

Dike said, "We have a great reputation in our marketplace that we've built over the past 15 years. We understand our name took years to build but could be lost quickly if we sacrifice our values." ■

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