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Bellaire Builders' Burnitt Builds Beyond Trends

Bellaire Builders | Bellaire, Texas



Bellaire Builders' Burnitt Builds Beyond Trends

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

While trends in homes may come and go, for Abner Burnitt, owner of Bellaire Builders, building a quality, well-designed home for his customers is essential.

“Our goal is to build a home in the most efficient way for the best price. We build a home utilizing all the space we can. We don’t include wasted chases, for example. We utilize efficiency of design,” he stated.

“We provide the services of true custom home building from start to finish while charging a reasonable fee for what we do. We use a cost-fee structure. It’s not the best way to make money, but it’s the best way to build houses and make people happy.”

And Burnitt seems to be good at making people happy.

“We become partners with our homeowners for over a year. Some of my best friends today are people who we’ve built houses for. It’s fun to build for fun people.”

Burnitt has been building in Bellaire and in the west side neighborhoods of Memorial, University and Brazewood for 15 years. The area attracts people who want to be close

to downtown Houston, such as physicians who work at the Medical Center, business owners, professionals and oil industry executives, he said.

Bellaire Builders provides site acquisition, architectural design and interior design as part of its services.

Helping his clients acquire an appropriate lot in this sought-after area of Houston can be a challenge, but for Abner it’s a challenge he readily accepts. A commercial realtor before he became a builder, he has maintained his real estate license and owns Bellaire Realty so he can act as the broker to simplify site acquisition for his clients.

“We start by looking at the market areas where the client wants to live. It can sometimes take as long as eight months to find and acquire the lot,” Burnitt said. “Sometimes the lead time is long; sometimes it’s short. Fifty percent of the time we start from scratch, finding the lot and the architect. Of course, if the homeowner has a lot and an architect, it’s much faster.

“In Bellaire lots range from 5,000 sq. ft. to 20,000 sq. ft.



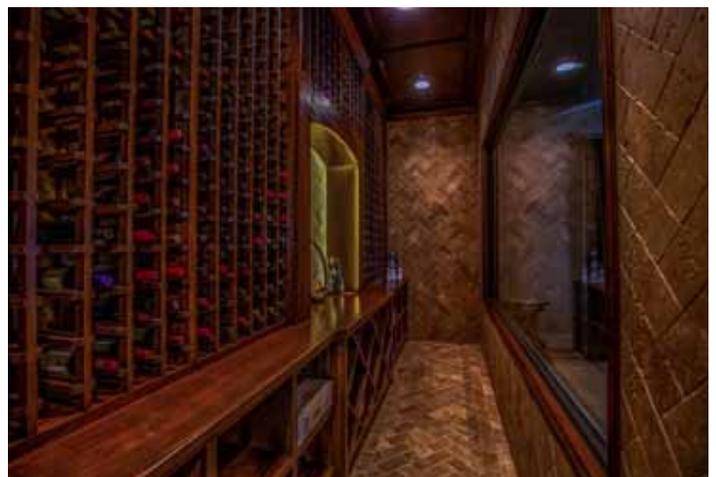
After we have acquired the lot, we try to fit the house on the lot to get the best use out of it. We develop plans to what the lot lends itself to,” he continued. Bellaire Builders has built more than 60 houses in its 15 years. “Each is pretty unique; we’ve repeated a house plan only once.”

He sees his role as a builder to create partnerships, matching the personality of a client with the skills of an architect who can work within the homeowners’ budget and taste to get the best results, he said. “It’s a marriage of architect, homeowner and builder.

“In our role we try to maintain the budget because most people are very budget conscious, even if they’re building a \$2 million home. We make sure they’re getting the best product for the best price.”

If a client needs an interior designer, Burnitt recommends three or four that he’s worked with in the past to the client. Sometimes the client just needs help making selections or choosing paint colors. Other times the client needs a designer for all aspects of the project.

Bellaire Builders typically has two to six homes underway at one time in a price range of \$1.5 – \$2.5 million. The company’s current projects include two homes in Bellaire and one in Memorial with a fourth project in the beginning stages.





Burnitt admits neither he nor the company has much of a social media presence. But he depends heavily on his company's reputation for word-of-mouth recommendations. As an example, he noted that just last week someone asked on social media for recommendations for a builder in Bellaire. A client of his from 10 years ago said to call Bellaire Builders. "My livelihood depends on those kind of word-of-mouth recommendations."

For Abner, building is a very creative process. "It is literally taking a blank piece of paper and creating something that will be there for a very long time." However, he knows that the houses he built will not stay the same forever. He cited as an example a home he built 12 years ago where the homeowners are changing countertops to keep up with the latest trends.



Burnitt would like to grow Bellaire Builders for the next generation. The company is family-owned and -operated, and his step-son may be interested in joining the company at some point in the future.

Abner is an optimist. “There’s always new construction, even in a down market. There is always a cycle of activity at the beginning of every year.” He speaks from experience. Bellaire Builders survived the 2008 downturn by shedding its employees and turning to remodeling to survive, “but we never stopped building houses.”

And that’s Abner Burnitt’s plan for the future – to keep building houses until he retires and the next generation takes over.



*For more information,
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