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Publisher's Note

It's the Christmas Season! It's the most wonderful time of the year, when we celebrate Christ coming to this earth to be the Savior for all mankind. Family and friends spend special time together eating turkey and gumbos, sitting by the fireplace with music and merriment; it is such a joyful time. As I have said so many times before, we are blessed to be here in Acadiana. We are rich in heritage, rich in spirit, and rich in resources!

My next featured builder is Alan Plaisance, owner of Van Alan Homes. From the moment you step into one of his homes, you will appreciate the attention to detail. His customers believe the craftsmanship is superior and his service and professionalism is second to none!

Enjoy,
April Becquet

Please pass me around the office. Acadiana Builder makes great reading material for anyone interested in the building market.



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Courtesy of Van Alan Homes

Van Alan Homes a Trusted Name in Homebuilding

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

With the experience of building more than 250 custom homes, Van Alan Plaisance of Van Alan Homes knows his customers. And they know Van Alan Homes.

After 10 years of providing superior craftsmanship and unparalleled service, Van Alan Homes is one of Acadiana's most trusted names in homebuilding, according to Plaisance.

"We have created a brand of custom homes which are a combination of classic old world craftsmanship, modern technology and traditional Acadiana symbolism," he explained.

Recognized by the industry and the public, its awards include Best of Houzz (2015), The Times of Acadiana (2014, 2015), Locals Love Us (2012-2015), House & Home First Place in 4000+ (2013), House & Home Best in Show (2011) and House & Home Outdoor Living Design Award (2011).

"We pride ourselves on our ability to provide quality construction at the most affordable price. Our typical customer is a second- or third-time homebuyer who wants a higher quality home than is typically found in a starter home or spec home. They demand homes that are handcrafted by the most skilled craftsmen using

the finest materials."

Van Alan Homes is a mid-volume custom builder that combines exceptional luxury with custom features and affordability in all price ranges, Plaisance added. The family-owned-and-operated company averages about 30 completed homes each year, with 25-30 homes under construction at all times. "We have set up the company infrastructure accordingly to enable us to handle this workload efficiently."

Its prices range from \$250,000 to more than \$1,000,000, with sizes ranging from 1,800 sq ft to more than 10,000 sq ft. The company builds in

Continued on Page 12

Housing Lot Shortage Stymies Home Sales



Home construction is on pace to hit a post-recession high this year, but a fundamental problem is preventing an even sharper ramp-up: a shortage of places to put the units.

Builders are increasingly complaining of a dearth of developed lots, a crunch that's becoming more prominent as housing starts pick up. They blame restrictive regulations, limited financing for lot development and buyers' growing preference to live in or near cities, where there's little unused land.

"It's likely limiting the number of new homes for sale," says David Crowe, chief economist of the



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National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). And, he adds, tighter supplies are “raising the price of a house.”


New home sales fell 11.5% in September, the Commerce Department said Monday, but they’re still up 18% for the year and builders’ sales expectations are at a 10-year high. NAHB expects 1.1 million housing starts this year, which is up from 1 million in 2014 and the most since the 2007 real estate crash, but still short of the 1.5 million historical average.

One reason starts aren’t accelerating faster is the shortage of developed lots. Typically, a developer installs infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer lines on a vacant parcel of land and sells the tract to a builder who then constructs a subdivision. Earlier this year, 57% of builders said they expect the cost

and availability of developed lots to be among their most significant problems in 2015, up from the 46% who rated it a big issue in 2013.

Among the reasons:

- Regulations and local demands. Federal environmental rules have gotten more stringent in recent



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Lafayette, Youngsville, Broussard, New Iberia, Carencro and the surrounding areas.

Most of its custom homes feature a great amount of detail, Alan noted. The smaller ones usually take five to six months to construct, while the larger ones may take as long as 10 to 12 months to complete.

“We always tell our customers that we don’t consider the construction of their home to be a race. We will not sacrifice quality for speed. Our goal is to use only highly skilled and dependable subcontractors, even if we have to wait for the better craftsmen to be available.”

Those subcontractors are busy creating unique ceiling designs and impressive moldings, custom furniture-style cabinetry and wood

paneling as well as installing granite countertops, stone fireplaces and antique timber trusses.

Van Alan Homes focuses on making the building experience a pleasant one for its customers. “We have spent a lot of time trying to take the anxiety

out of building. We try to streamline our processes, while making sure the house stays completely custom with as many personal touches as the homeowner wants,” Plaisance said.

He noted that some customers find the whole building process



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes



“We have spent a lot of time trying to take the anxiety out of building....”

Courtesy of Van Alan Homes

challenging, while the selection process is overwhelming to others because they don't want to make a mistake or choose something they will later regret.

“With the addition of my wife Jalyn to our management team in 2013, we are now able to refocus on our customers, which allows us to achieve higher customer satisfaction. Jalyn spends a lot of time with our customers throughout the selection process.

“We always tell our customers that they may not enjoy the building process, but they will love their home in the end.”

The end of the building process is special to both Alan and Jalyne Plaisance. “My wife and I both thoroughly enjoy watching families build their dream homes, regardless



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes

of how big or small they are. There is something special about helping with their ideas and seeing their reaction when those ideas come to life.

“For most people this will be the home they will either retire in or raise their family in, and it is a good feeling to have a small part in that lasting

memories will be made in a home built by Van Alan Homes.”

Alan got his introduction to building as a teenager when his family owned several rental properties. “We were always fixing things, remodeling, changing light fixtures, installing floors, painting, etc. We never hired

anyone to do anything back then; we did it all ourselves. This helped me gain a broad construction knowledge.

“In high school I loved to remodel

and paint. For birthdays and Christmas I would ask for tools as my presents. I remember my parents asking me what I wanted as my high school graduation gift. I responded

that I wanted a Craftsman circular saw. And that’s what I got! And I still have that saw today!”

Plaisance worked for a marine contractor when he was a student at Nicholls State University. He often worked as a carpenter’s helper, remodeling and repairing offshore living quarters.

Although he always wanted to be a builder, Plaisance first worked for 14 years for an international drilling company after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in business with a major in marketing. During those years as a purchasing supervisor, Alan gained formal training in marine construction projects, budgets, accounting and vendor management, areas that would serve him well as a builder.

Plaisance started Van Alan Homes in 2006. He said one of the most



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes

important of his duties as a business owner is to ensure that additional projects are always in the pipeline. “We get most of our business from word of mouth from previous customers, so it is very important for our team to put out a great product.”

Jalyn Plaisance, as director of operations, helps with that product. “She monitors the job supervisors and reports on their progress. She also fills the role of office manager and keeps the office running smoothly and efficiently,” Alan noted.



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes

The Plaisances' three children are also active in the business. "By the end of most projects, our homeowners grow to know our children well, and that is probably the neatest part of our family-owned-and-operated business."

Their 16-year-old son Carson often works at job sites, cleaning up work areas, including pressure washing. Their 18-year-old daughter Alyssa, who is in her first year at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, often runs errands, picks up and delivers paperwork and makes copies or does filing. Their 9-year-old son Cohen likes to keep the office tidy by shredding sensitive documents and vacuuming the stairwell. "You will often find him in our office after school entertaining whoever walks through the door. In our industry that is a very important role," Plaisance added.

And in their leisure time? "Our kids are very involved with sports, so we spend many weekends at the ball park. Jalyn and I also like to tour old plantation homes throughout the South."

You may contact Van Alan Homes at 327 Iberia St., Unit 7, Youngsville, LA 70529 or by calling 337-866-8648. You may also visit www.vanalanhomes.com or write alan@vanalancompanies.com.



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes



Courtesy of Van Alan Homes

years, including a broader definition of wetlands that builders must avoid or mitigate. Meanwhile local governments increasingly are requiring developers make concessions such as financing the expansion of a sewage plant. Such requirements can delay or scuttle projects and have become more prevalent as the improving economy reduces local officials' need for the tax revenue that new development brings, Crowe says.

Builders surveyed by NAHB this year said regulatory requirements have added seven months to development, up from four months in 2011.

Randy Noel, president of Reve, a home builder in New Orleans' western suburbs, says more expensive wetlands mitigation mandates have severely reduced lot development and increased his land purchase costs by about \$25,000 per lot. As a result, he says he plans to cease subdivision construction during the next few years and instead build pricier homes on isolated lots in cities.

"I've been begging (developers) to get something in the ground," Noel says.

- Limited financing. Banks remain wary of financing land acquisition and development, leaving fewer lots for builders. Of those that both develop land and build houses, about 13% said they didn't seek a loan in the second quarter because they knew they wouldn't get it, a share that has fallen but remains elevated.

Some lenders are raising borrowing costs. Dean Mon, head of the Mon Group, an apartment builder in New Jersey, says he'll build a 48-unit project in Union City instead of three

projects with 132 units because he can only borrow 80% of the cost, down from 90%.

- Less land in cities. Buyers increasingly want to live in or near cities to be closer to amenities, but there are few available lots, partly because zoning laws have gotten stricter, especially for multifamily complexes, says Svenja Gudell,

chief economist of online real estate database firm Zillow.

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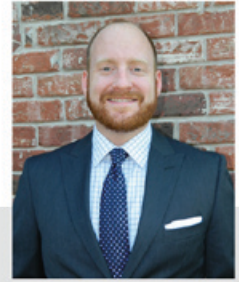
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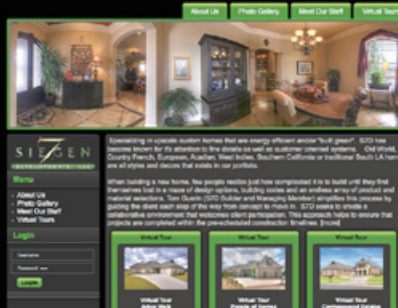
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