

New Home

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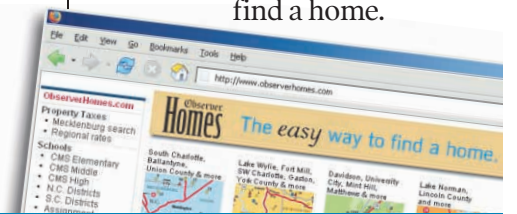
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INSIDE

- Home Plan | Interior rooms set on an angle 2H
- Your Toolbox | Refrigerators just keep getting bigger 5H
- Get Decorating | Master bath blends old and new 6H
- Cut Your Utility Bills | The case for low-voltage lights 9H

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2006

SECTION H

High-end buyers trading enormous houses for big ones with plenty of fancy touches

From supersized to downsized

BY CRISTINA BOLLING
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Luxury home buyers, especially empty nesters, are increasingly choosing smaller homes. They still enjoy luxury – and some of these smaller homes are twice as big as the average house – but builders say more high-end buyers are choosing amenities over rooms they’ll never use.

Instead of an extra 2,000 square feet, for instance, they’re choosing extra extravaganzas: gourmet kitchens, ornate moldings, exotic hardwood flooring. Many choose small yards with maintenance included.

“The days of the clients building these (6,000-plus square-foot) monsters are going away,” said Peter Leeke of Kingswood Custom Homes, who builds in South Charlotte. “‘More efficiency’ seems to be the phrase.”

Five years ago, Leeke said, his new-home buyers wanted basements of more than 2,000 square feet, under main living spaces of more than 4,500 square feet. Leeke says those customers now tell him they don’t often use their basements, and the higher utility bills and property taxes make the homes less appealing for resale.

That’s not to say high-end buyers are spending less on their new homes, or are opting for tiny cottages.

A 3,600-square-foot home in The Sanctuary on Lake Wylie runs more than \$1 million, because of such luxury amenities as high-end appliances and more expensive energy-efficient heating and cooling.

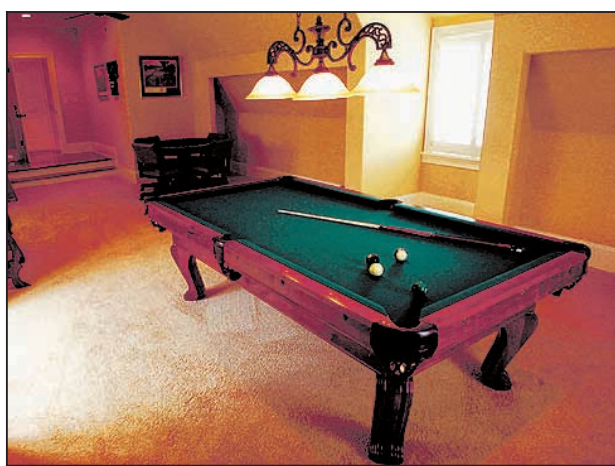
But Leeke and other builders say

SEE DOWNSIZED | 8H



JASON E. MICZEK – SPECIAL TO THE OBSERVER

Mary and Phil Gentlesk (above) took advantage of the space above their two-car garage to create a game room with a pool table (right). Their upstairs media room (far right) features a flat-screen plasma television and gas fireplace and opens onto a second-floor terrace.



Housing

Some builders avoid MLS when selling

As a result, many sales go unreported

Allen Norwood



Harry Diehl of Hills Communities says one of his communities should rank near the top in Mecklenburg County for condo and townhouse sales during the first half of this year. In the list we ran last Saturday, Hills wasn’t among the busiest 10. The figures he provided were impressive – actually, two of his communities should rank near the top – and, what’s more, his figures don’t reflect all sales in those neighborhoods. Other popular builders were likely underrepresented, too, so here’s a look at

why. Last week’s figures were closings through Carolina Multiple Listing Services. Based on MLS closings, Fifth and Poplar uptown was the top complex January through June, with 98 sales. Belle Vista at Ballantyne was second with 34.

Diehl said Copper Ridge, a Hills project just south of Ballantyne, had 33 closings during the period, and Alexander Chase in Cornelius had 30.

Our numbers were accurate, and so were Diehl’s. The

SEE NORWOOD | 3H

Living Here

YOUR GUIDE TO THE CHARLOTTE REGION

This Southern blessing burns some of its hearers’ hearts

Southerners love to bless your heart, but not everyone likes having it blessed.

That’s the conclusion after the Observer ran an article last week examining the common Southern phrase “bless your heart” and suggesting it’s usually used to cloak an insult. Having absorbed it into my vocabulary while growing up here, I usually use it as an expression of sympathy, as in: “You found out the place you just moved into has fleas? Oh, bless your heart.”

Readers to the New Around Town blog posted some of their favorite examples: “With her hair bleached out like that, she looks like a floozy ... bless her heart.” – Rachel

“He does the best he can, bless his heart.” That pretty much nails a guy as being nothing more than a friend....

“We use this around the office all the time.... We’ve even taken dibs on who gets to name their first novel ‘Bless Your Heart.’ (I won.)” – Tressie

“I saw on a T-shirt where it said ‘Bless your heart equals ‘You stupid idiot.’” – Lisa



Leigh Dyer



Online Extras

The blog “New Around Town” and extensive resources from Living Here magazine: WWW.CHARLOTTE.COM/living

Follow-up: Uptown vs. Downtown

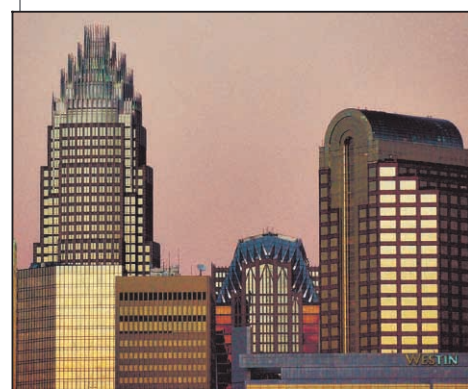
Following last week’s column, opinion remains divided over whether central Charlotte should be “uptown” or “downtown,” but nobody seemed to like the “center city” compromise and the majority leaned toward uptown. Sample comments:

■ “The term ‘uptown’ will always be confusing to someone, and the debate will never end.” — TOM MYERS, SOUTH CHARLOTTE

■ “Either (uptown or downtown) sounds much better than ‘center city.’ Charlotte seems to make up too many fancy sounding names for plain old things. ‘South End’ will forever be known as DILWORTH, at least to the ones born here.... ‘University City’ will always be known as UNCC, as in ‘I live near UNCC.’” — DAVID BROWN, NEAR UNCC

■ “Charlotte-Mecklenburg natives have spoken of ‘uptown’ for decades. When in Charlotte, do as Charlotteans do.” — JACK HENIFORD, YORK, S.C.

■ “For the last time: Uptown Charlotte is ‘uptown’...not ‘downtown,’ not ‘center city,’ not ‘in the loop,’ none of those pitifully lame adjectives.” — JOE O’NEILL JR., SOUTHEAST CHARLOTTE



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