

(feature story)

And Baby Makes Three

BY WENDY DANKS

Rob and Alisha Weaver

had lived in their starter home for six years. The young couple enjoyed its urban location and its convenient size, which was perfect for the two busy professionals — Alisha is a nurse and Rob a graphic designer — but when they decided to start a family, they began thinking about making a move.

“We knew that when we wanted to start a family, we would need a little bigger place to grow into,” explained Alisha. “That’s when we started shopping around for homes.”

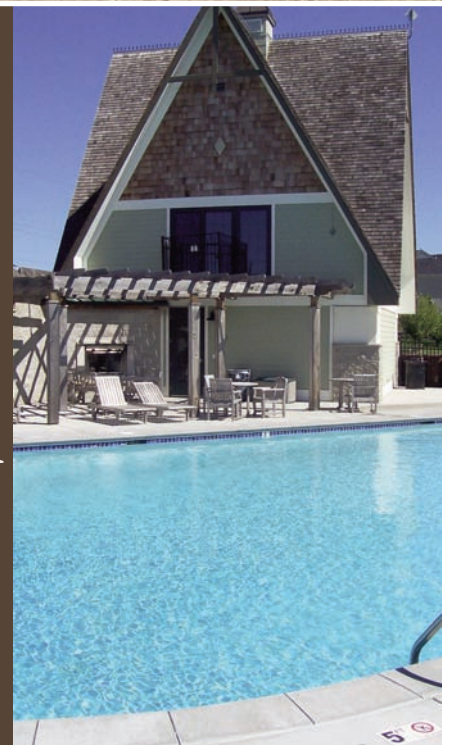
Even though the resale market was slow, they were optimistic about selling their current home with its great location and popular price range. They also anticipated finding a larger home at a really good price.

They began their search for a bigger, more suitable home in the summer of 2008, listing their



It feels like a
vacation
every time I
come
home
from work,

~ ROB WEAVER





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existing home in October. They wanted to find something in the northeastern suburbs where Rob grew up and where they still have family and friends, and began looking online and on their own to see what was available.

Rob and Alisha weren't interested in limiting their options, so they checked out resale as well as new homes in the area. "It was a year before we made our decision that we had explored the option of building with Hartman Homes," said Alisha. "We really liked their model and their price points were right. And that's where we hooked up with Don [Hoye]", a real estate agent who works with Hartman.

While they had been searching without a realtor, they felt comfortable with Don and asked him to represent their interests as they continued to shop for the perfect home for their growing family.

They actually liked a lot of the resale homes they looked at, but "the ones that didn't need anything or that we were really excited about were above our price point," Rob said. "A lot of the other ones were nice, but we didn't find anything that got us really pumped."

For those that were in their price range "we had a list of things we wanted to do or change right away," Alisha explained. "That's when we found out we were expecting, and we didn't want the craziness of a baby coming and having to redo the bathroom or the kitchen or something like that. It got to the point that it just made sense to build."

{CONTINUED TO PAGE 22}

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Continued From...

And, Baby Makes Three

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

And that's when they came back to Hartman Homes and a neighborhood in a location they liked and that had a lot of the amenities for a young family. They liked the model and Hartman's prices. They felt good about working with owner Mike Hartman, and they loved the idea of putting their own stamp on their new home.

"We had a lot of ideas about what we wanted in the design and layout, which we presented to Hartman," said Rob. "They took our vision and designed a home that was even better."


"They suggested uses of the space and things like adding closets where we wouldn't have thought of," added Alisha. They also explained the cost/value benefit of adding a geothermal HVAC system. With the current energy tax incentives plus future energy savings, the system just made a lot of sense.

With the layout complete, they worked with Hartman Home's interior designer, Julie Speer, to pull together the selections, colors and finishes. They had collected magazine clippings with the styles and colors they liked which helped ease the process. With a good idea of what they both liked, Julie would pull just enough samples to make the final selections easy.

"We have pretty similar tastes so there wasn't a lot of things that we butted heads about," maintained Alisha. "Overall, everything went really smoothly."

Hartman Homes dug their foundation in July of 2009, and their new home in Victor Gardens, Hugo, was ready for move-in by Halloween. And the Weavers couldn't be happier. The style is their own and the design will suit their needs with the nursery just off the owners' suite. Even the two active dogs (Fibi and Fergus) are happy and have plenty of room to play.

"We love it!" exclaims Alisha. "The whole experience has been fun. And then everyday we wake up and say Ahh, we get to live here."

"It feels like a vacation every time I come home from work," agrees Rob. 

Continued From...

Build it and She Will Come

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18




room and two extra bedrooms to house a growing family.

"I also thought about the ease of maintaining the home," he notes. "I did as much as I could to make it maintenance-free." He even installed electrical outlets under the soffits to make it easier to plug in his holiday lights. Other wife and family-friendly features include plenty of cabinet and storage space, a generous owners' suite bedroom, a large deck and hot tub, and a fireplace with a pre-set thermostat to take the chill out of frigid winter mornings.

Like all good Marines, Koopmeiners prides himself on his organizational skills and having everything in good working order. To ensure that he would be able to meet any future home "emergency," Koopmeiners catalogued his home's mechanical systems. "I took 300 to 500 photos during the building processes," he notes. "I have photos of all of the wiring in the walls, where the underground pipes and valves are for the sprinkler system, and of the underground sewer pipes."

Choosing colors was the most difficult task this color-blind bachelor faced. "I asked family and friends to help—to make sure I wasn't buying a pink carpet," he says. This family-friendly home nonetheless has features that are all male. For instance, the garage has hot and cold running water as well as a drain system so Koopmeiners can wash his car in the winter-time.

Koopmeiners and his new home have yet to attract Ms. Right. "I'm absolutely available," says Koopmeiners. Give them time, though. This warm, well-cataloged home and hopeful bachelor have a lot to offer. 

Continued From...

Coming Home

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

replica of what we had or fix what didn't work," says Jill. They decided to fix the destroyed home's flaws and hired Cornerstone Custom Design architects to develop a plan. Their original home had three bedrooms upstairs and one on the main-level where their youngest child slept. It also had a step-down between the kitchen and great room, which prevented them from expanding the dining table into the living area when entertaining guests. By building a full two-story home they could fit four bedrooms on the second level, and they eliminated the step-down.

The third major flaw had to do with their travel trailer, which never quite fit along the side of their house. "It was an eerie example of *be careful of what you wish for*," says Jill. "We always wished we could just pick up the house and move it a couple of feet." Because the home's foundation had to be rebuilt, that's exactly what Lang did — moved the house a couple of feet and added a parking pad for the trailer.

The Dumas family lost almost everything material that fateful day in May 2008, including most of their family photos. The only photos that survived were due to the efforts of neighbors who stayed up all night drying what photos they could retrieve from the Dumas household. That gesture and Lang's ability to complete the project quickly meant a great deal to the displaced family. "We weren't just building a house, we were trying to bring our family home," Jill says. "Tim was sensitive to our lifestyle and able to make changes on the fly."

On October 8, 2008, the Dumas family moved into their new house. "We were one of the first families home," Jill notes. 