



Something old, something renewed

At the International Builders Show, an old house is moved and renovated to make way for The New American Home 2007.

By HAROLD BUBIL
REAL ESTATE EDITOR
harold.bubil@heraldtribune.com

ORLANDO -- Tearing down is becoming so passé.

Once a trend, it has become almost required in American building that old houses be demolished to make way for homes that are bigger and grander.

But The New American Home at this year's International Builders Show makes a big statement of its own, that just about any house can be saved -- if the owners are willing to pay to move and renovate it.

When the National Association of Home Builders' National Council of the Housing Industry (NCHI) chose a spot in a historic neighborhood overlooking Lake Eola for The New American Home, they figured it would make sense to tear down the existing structure -- a dilapidated house that seemed beyond help. The city approved.

But the local historic preservation board objected, claiming that the 1909 house was important as a relic of early Orlando. The city agreed to save the building. To make it happen, it allowed builder Carmen Dominguez to subdivide the site and move the existing structure to the new lot.

To solve the problem of having a fixer-upper next to the \$2.95 million New American Home, Dominguez suggested that the old house be renovated -- giving birth to a new attraction at this year's IBS, The Renewed American Home. It's in keeping with a current trend: urban revitalization.

What was once a small cottage for a working-class family has been transformed into a showplace of the latest and greatest features for 21st-century living.

The design of each house promotes aging-in-place (universal design), energy efficiency, and the use of the latest technology, including integration of various low-voltage systems, such as home-run structured wiring and whole-house lighting control, entertainment and security.

The Florida Green Building Coalition has rated each house "green"; both also have earned the EnergyStar label. The Renewed American Home has an 18.5 SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) air-conditioning system; just a few years ago, 10 or 12 SEER ACs were considered energy efficient.

The Renewed American Home is a blend of Victorian, coastal design and bungalow.

But only about 15 percent of the original cottage remains. The interior was gutted and the exterior rebuilt and expanded -- but with the same architecture as the original house.

"The house was used and abused," said Bill Nolan of the Affordable Housing Institute in Orlando. "Once the siding began to come off, you wonder how it could have stood up."

"It looks vintage all the way around the exterior," said residential designer Karen Kassik, whose Orlando company, Lucia, Kassik & Monday, specializes in upper-end remodeling projects. "We added a front porch, added a porte cochere, and the walls, as you move toward the back of the house, they're not just long, straight lines. They move in, they move out. I've got shed roof combinations with high-peaked gable combinations. It maintains its look all the way around."

Expanded to 5,800 square feet of air-conditioned space, the house is for sale at \$3.15 million.

The inside of the house is all new.

"We wanted to create a floor plan that was marketable for today's lifestyle," said Kassik. "When you have these old homes, you have very small, square rooms. We wanted to open those rooms up so we had large, inviting spaces. From the time you walk in the front door to the back of the family room, you've got about a 66-foot vista."

The kitchen, eating area and family room are open to each other, "as a buyer would expect in any current house they would move into." The Kitchen-Aid appliances are Energy Star rated for high efficiency.

The contractor was PSG Construction of Winter Park.

Interior design and merchandising of both the new and renewed homes is by Rob Nowfels of Robb and Stucky Interiors of Altamonte Springs.

Demonstrating that historic homes can still enjoy modern luxuries, the four-bedroom, five-and-a-half bath home features installed systems in structured wiring, security/life safety, multi-zone audio, lighting control and flat panel displays. As part of the renovation, a basement was added equipped with a wine cellar, exercise room, laundry suite, gift-wrapping station and game room.

"We tried to create a green house," said Stephen Gidus, partner of PSG Construction which built the house to Florida Green Building Coalition standards. "It has environmentally friendly materials. Georgia-Pacific composite siding materials to keep same profile from an aesthetic standpoint.

"On the original part of the house, the front part, we used cypress (it was required by the preservation group). The additional part of the original house and the detached garage has the G-P siding. You look at them side by side and you can't tell the difference ... and it pleased the historical preservation board," said Gidus.

He said the project "illustrates how a home can be renovated to fit modern needs while still preserving the integrity of its historic nature."

The biggest challenge was moving the house because it has a basement. It had to be lifted and then transported horizontally on a system of rollers to its new location.



COURTESY PHOTOS / JAMES F. WILSON

The outdoor living area of The Renewed American Home in Orlando. The 1909 house was moved to make way for The New American Home 2007, then renovated and expanded.

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