

## « RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

# Building the Best

NATASHA BALL

"Give me the luxuries of life and I will willingly do without the necessities."

Maybe what Frank Lloyd Wright meant to say was, "Who needs three bedrooms and a bath when you have the means to go custom?"

That's what some Tulsans are asking as they seek the best local architects for the most intimate of projects: The home.

### Mansion Market

People in the market for a custom home aren't satisfied by the developer-driven neighborhoods full of cloned houses.

"There are more and more houses being built without architects," said Roger Coffey, partner at Olsen Coffey Architects, 324 E. Third St., citing architect credentials are not needed to plan a home in Oklahoma.

"Everybody wants to be an architect," said Gene Starr of Gene Starr Architects, 2503 E. 21st St. "But, we think we can save them money, a lot of headaches, mistakes, and I'm sure we do."

However, builders who do business by assembly line don't make money by tailoring to individual preferences.

Enter residential architects.

"I think as people become demanding or sophisticated, they may want something that reflects themselves, their personality and personal taste. That's why people go to an architect," Coffey said. "They have specific things they do and specific ways of doing them."

The market for custom homes in Tulsa is "not red-hot, but pretty active," said Brian Freese, principal at Freese Architecture, 1634 S. Boston Ave.

"Most of my clients are able to afford a custom home whenever they want to do it," he said.

Custom homes by Freese Architecture start at around \$450,000. The top end ranges from \$10 to \$12 million. Average homes are valued around \$850,000.

"Right now, it's great," said David Center of D.A. Center & Associates, 208 E. New Orleans St., said of today's market conditions. "We're as busy as we've probably ever been. There are lots of custom homes being built for high-dollar prices. I don't see it slowing down anytime soon."

Center's work is 75 percent residential. Even his commercial projects, including the Clark Brewster building on 21st St., has residential flavor.

Center works with homeowners with budgets upward of \$400,000. He is now working on two south Tulsa projects in the range of 8,000-10,000 SF valued at \$3-4 million. About 85 percent of Center's work is in the Tulsa metropolitan area.

The opportunity to design a home for high-profile Tulsans occurs relatively often in a city of 382,457.

"We did the mayor's [Kathy Taylor's] house," quipped Stephen Olsen, partner at Olsen Coffey.

"The architect on the house was actually Alan Madewell. He did the shell, and we were hired to finish out the inside. It was fun. She was a nice lady to work

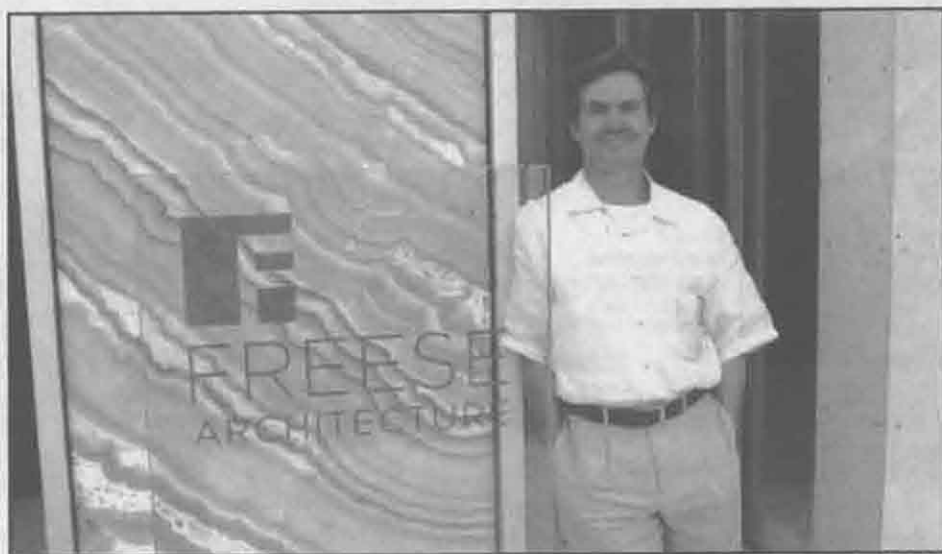
is the Doyle Cotton home at 2660 S. Birmingham Place.

A modern ranch house west of Tulsa measuring 7,500 SF — not including a separate tower, utility structure and garage — is amongst current projects.



SARAH NICODEMUS

Gene and Jason Starr put lavish bathrooms and closets in the homes they design for affluent Tulsans.



SARAH NICODEMUS

Brian Freese, principal at Freese Architecture, strives to design homes that "look like they grew out of Oklahoma."

with," Coffey said of Taylor.

Alan Madewell was not available for comment on his work for Taylor and her husband, Vanguard CEO Phil Lobeck by press time.

### "Tulsa French"

Past projects for Gene and Jason Starr, Gene's son and partner, of Gene Starr Architects include a house of nearly 20,000 SF built in south Tulsa between Harvard and Lewis on 72nd St. Another

Gene Starr Architects work is chiefly local.

The home on 72nd was "a French chateau house," Jason said.

"I remember at the time we were thinking, 'OK, a big, French chateau house in Tulsa, Oklahoma.'"

"They had done some extensive travel in Europe, in France, and they liked that style," Gene said. "A lot of people like it."

"So many of the houses have that influence that we call it 'Tulsa French,'" Gene joked.

"I enjoy doing a lot of different styles," said Center. "I know that back in the early to mid-1980s, the Country French style was happening. Jack Arnold started that around here, so I did a lot of country French, mainly because I worked for Jack."

David Center found his niche in residential design while working with Arnold, a renowned local architect whose work includes the Robert Leikam house at 2445 E. 30th St.

Though local architects are sure the

Country French craze isn't going anywhere, more clients are looking for other ideas. Tulsa's residential architects are refreshed.

"Many people are really tired of the ubiquitous French country, European," said Freese, whose design portfolio is 98 percent local. "I am talking to more and more people who want to live more simply, and they don't want to maintain a huge mansion."

Current Freese projects include a \$12 million home in Norman, a custom lake house at Grand Lake and a home on five

acres across from Gilcrease Museum. The house by Gilcrease will exemplify what Freese calls "Oklahoma modern."

"It's modern, but you see some Midwestern roots. The roof pitches are very low with very deep overhangs, so they provide good shading to the walls. Lots of natural stone, wood — lots of glass."

### Open Space, Mixed Use

"More people want to live leaner, cleaner, simpler lives," Freese said.

That means smaller homes more efficiently designed.

"In the homes I design, I try to focus on as few walls and as few doors as possible, and as much clean, open space as we can possibly get while giving them the appropriate amount of privacy in the right places."

Kitchens are becoming less task-oriented and are beginning to look more like social centers.

"It's not like in the old days where you just went in and cooked. It's becoming a more social part of the house," Olsen said.

Gone are the days of sequestered and underused formal living and dining rooms.

"We're building a lot of houses where there is one huge room where everything is going on. Everything is very open," Coffey said.

The proportions of the average house

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have expanded like an inflating balloon, Center said.

"We've seen the basic, standard house move from 1,000 SF to 4,000 SF. You get these massive, big - what I call 'builder' - homes."

People want bigger bathrooms, closets, dressing areas, Gene said.

"The old houses don't have large bathrooms," Gene said. "Today, people want a Jacuzzi-type tub that is lavish, with a big space. "Older houses have smaller closets. But today, they have lots of money, I guess, so they have lots of clothes and shoes. We do houses with closets for the women that hold something like 1,000 pair of shoes."



COURTESY

Sellers' residence in Sapulpa by Freese Architecture.

### Green Spaces

More homeowners are going green, Freese said.

"More people are sensitive to living lightly on the earth," he said. "More people understand that the environment is not something 'out there;' it's where we live."

Freese adds "huge" amounts of glass to imbue interior spaces with natural light. He also minds how a house is positioned on its property to take full advantage of natural heat and light.

"And, if appropriately done, it's more energy efficient. Case in point: Many times during the day, we work with no lights. The studio has a big skylight. Plus, with the other windows carefully placed that gives us all the light we need to work. Our energy bills are a fraction of what they were where we used to be," at 6144 S. Lewis Ave.

The perception that energy efficiency costs more is false, Freese said.

"Architecture in its truest form is a snapshot of the culture, technology, the way or thinking and living at any time. Why would we live in houses that don't employ the current technologies?" «

space, three wet bars and an outdoor pool.

The property appraised for \$435.25 per SF and is the largest home in Tulsa, containing more than 18,600 SF.

The home of EasyTEL Communications Inc. President Tim Kloehr ranks as the second most valuable house in Tulsa.

The Kloehr home, 8654 S. Norwood Ave., appraised for \$6.43 million, or \$384 per SF, and was built in 2005.

### Worldly Homes

Tulsa's third, fifth, and 44th most valuable homes belong to the family of World Publishing Co. Chairman Robert and wife Roxana Lorton.

Robert E. Lorton III, CEO of World Publishing and the son of Robert, owns the third most valuable home in the city, at 1396 E. 27th Place.

The Mediterranean-style house was designed by San Francisco-based architect Richard Robertson and appraised for \$6.67 million in 2003. It contains 17,257 SF of usable living space including 9,077 SF on the ground floor, 7,229 SF on a second, and 951 in a finished basement.

The mansion-class home was built in 2001 and sits on a walled 101,930-SF lot situated across Rockford Ave. from the Philbrook Museum of Art.

The patriarch of the Lorton family, Robert, owns a 9,220-SF home at 1841 E. 27th St., which is listed as the fifth most valuable, appraising at \$4.72 million.

It was designed by New York Architect Oscar Shamamian and was completed in 2002.

The French farmhouse style home of Harold and Tracy Lorton Salisbury, 1332 E. 27th Place, came in 44th on the list.

The home, which contains 7,635 SF, was designed by architect Jack Arnold and built in 1996.

### Oil, Nuns and Mega-Churches

Charles Stephenson, the co-founder of Tulsa's Vintage Petroleum Inc., is the owner of the city's fourth most

### TULSA COUNTY'S MOST EXPENSIVE HOMES

The following are the most expensive homes ranked by appraised value per SF

RANK	OWNER	ADDRESS	APPRAISED VALUE PER SF
1	Roxana Lorton	1841 E. 27th St.	\$511.82
2	Quapaw Investments	2800 S. Boston Ave.	\$505.92
3	Charles & Peggy Stephenson	2225 E. 30th St.	\$468.43
4	John & Diane Gearhart	11605 S. Erie Ave.	\$455.27
5	William E. Lobeck Jr.	2811 S. Columbia Place	\$435.25
6	Charles Schusterman Trustee	4011 S. Yorktown Place	\$412.00
7	Rob & Kim Coretz	2675 S. Birmingham Place	\$388.84
8	Robert E. Lorton III	1396 E. 27th Place	\$386.80
9	Tim & Sheryl Kloehr	8654 S. Norwood Ave.	\$384.98
10	Chester & Debra Cadieux	2119 E. 30th Place	\$365.31

Source: Tulsa County Assessor's office



valuable home.

Stephenson, who in 2006 sold Vintage to Los Angeles-based Occidental Petroleum for \$3.8 billion, erected his 10,674-SF home in 2002. The house sits on a 34,126-SF lot at 2225 E. 30th St.

Possessing perhaps the most fascinating history of any home in Tulsa,

John and Julie Nickel's \$3.47 million dollar home at 2216 E. 30th St. ranked 11 on the list of most valuable homes.

The Nickel home, which was built in 1932 by oil baron Foster Parriott, was donated to the Benedictine Sisters of Guthrie in 1955 for use as a convent.

The sisters used the property as their Motherhouse for 11 years before moving to their current location at 2200 S. Lewis Ave.

The Georgian-style home, which includes a silver vault, a 30' by 30' entrance foyer, and a 40' by 45' formal living room, has undergone a substantial historic renovation in the past year.

Another notable name on the list of most expensive homes is that of the Rev. Kenneth Hagin Jr., the pastor of Rhema Bible Church and president of Kenneth Hagin Ministries.

The Hagin home, 4950 E. 114th Place, appraised for \$2.25 million and contains 7,285 SF of living space. «

