



NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION in Lexington

by Katie Gantt

Energy savings and technology rule.



It's no secret that the Town of Lexington has seen remarkable growth in the last decade. Thanks to our top notch schools, proximity to Lake Murray, temperate climate, and great dining and shopping – it's really no wonder. With such rapid growth comes much new home construction. A routine drive to work will give witness to new homes and new home communities all along the way. In fact, Lexington is opening new schools at a pace of approximately once every two to three years to accommodate all of the new members of our community. With this rapid growth in mind, Lexington Life spoke with three prominent, local home builders to get the scoop on what styles, technologies, and amenities are popular and available in our surging market.

Essex Homes was founded in 1993 by Karl Haslinger. Karl began building homes in Aiken, SC, one home at a time. He eventually moved and settled his business headquarters to Lexington, where the company really took off. They are now servicing several different counties in the Midlands area, Charlotte, the NC Coast, and are also starting to build in upstate SC. Director of Marketing, Susan Longshore, says that several new projects are coming on line in the Lexington area. "We are always building in Lexington because of the demand. Because of the location, the lake, the schools...the growth in Lexington is continuous and it's not slowing down."



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Essex is seeing a demand for ranch, craftsman, and multi-generational style homes (think mother-in-law suites, for example) in our area. People are also asking for floorplans that allow them to spend more time at home enjoying convenience and ease of living. "People are taking stay-cations – enjoying the lake and the local area. This is creating a desire for homes to be more of an entertainment space. We are building a lot of outdoor kitchens, big bar areas, installing ice machines, wine chillers, etc." Essex's eBuilt homes are built to reduce the amount of energy required to operate a new home, reduce the impact on the environment during and after construction, and help buyers keep more money in their pockets. Their In2ity Program uses modern technological advances to provide remote music, security camera, and door lock control capabilities. This is available at no monthly cost to home owners.

Great Southern Homes was founded in 2004 by Michael Nieri, who has been in the home building business for the last 25 years. His company serves all the major markets in SC and has also penetrated the GA market. They plan to increase their footprint into NC and further into GA. They've seen great

success as exemplified by their 756 closings last year alone. Bill Earle, Director of Strategic Markets, says, "Lexington was growing so fast over the last decade that currently there are not a lot of land positions where home builders can come in and build new communities. Because of this, land prices have soared which is affecting the cost of home building. But we are determined to offer homes that are affordably priced, so we are having to scratch deeper to make that happen." They are currently building a lake

front community just up 378 from Lexington and have homes in eight communities throughout Lexington.

Earle says that purchasing a new home versus a re-sale or, "pre-loved" home, offers some advantages. "New homes have been made much more energy and technology efficient. Green smart houses can significantly reduce your energy costs. We are actually able to compete with resale home prices when you factor in the energy savings over time." Great Southern is also seeing



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smart home technology as a big, new driver in sales. If a homeowner is sitting in bed and forgot to turn off the lights, they can say,



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“lights off” and the lights will automatically shut off. Similar features are available for closing the garage door, turning on music, or controlling your security system. If a child is home from school, the parent can unlock the door to let them in from a remote location, all via their cell phone.

Hurricane Builders was founded in 2000 by brothers Richard and Jose Romero. In their first year of building, they completed six homes. As of last year, they completed approximately 200. This year’s goal is 250-300. “Right now we want to grow at a reasonable pace to ensure the quality of our product and the stability of business. Growing too fast can sometimes cause costly mistakes” says Marketing and Public Relations Director, Angelica M. Romero. “We are really happy with the growth we are seeing.”

Angelica says that the Lexington market displays a demand for a variety of home styles and sizes. “We get consistent requests for everything from modest single stories on up to our largest offered floorplan.” A signature Hurricane exterior features stone or brick mixed with vinyl siding for a unique aesthetic. They also give buyers the option to personalize the color palate of their home. “We are also one of

the few companies that provide extensive landscaping to our properties as well as automatic sprinkler systems.”

Hurricane also emphasizes the importance of energy saving and technological advances in the industry. They offer a geofencing thermostat that can sense the owner is getting close to home (thanks to a cell phone app) and then turns on the heat or air. This comes standard in every home. They also offer zone system thermostats in all 2 story homes that allow “an owners’ suite experience.” The owners’ suite will be at their personalized temperature preference even if the rest of the home isn’t being kept cool. They currently have USB ports in all their kitchens and a vision “to one day be able to offer free energy communities. We are growing into this vision as the technologies become available.”

These local, growing companies are making sure that our new home communities stay attractive and cutting edge while remaining affordable for our local families. It doesn’t look like growth is slowing down here anytime in the near future, so we look forward to ways that Essex, Great Southern, and Hurricane will continue to innovate the market. ■

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