

# “Homing in” on San Antonio’s residential construction

Veteran builders offer insights into SA’s burgeoning new home market

**For many San Antonians, achieving the American dream isn’t just home ownership, it’s new home ownership. And for a variety of reasons, the local market for the freshly finished, often custom home construction is seeing a resurgence as buyers, young and old, flush and frugal, flock to newly created neighborhoods or entice builders to privately owned lots with the intent of acquiring an abode that’s never been occupied before.**

It can be a challenging and exciting undertaking, and to capture a little of the essence of this creative and indispensable industry, SAN ANTONIO MAN has invited five area veteran builders to share a few insights on what’s going up and what’s going down in the always active, never dull new home biz.

## The home turf

Since its inception and naming in 1691, San Antonio has been erecting housing to shelter its ever-growing populace. In the days of yesteryear construction was entrusted to laymen who generally relied on established techniques, trial and error and maybe even the proper recipe for mixing adobe. Homes were erected as needed, and quality was never assured. Remarkably, it wasn’t until the middle of the 19th century that the city got its first planned suburban neighborhood, the King William District.

Today, the landscape seemingly explodes with development reaching far and wide sprouting top-caliber housing at mind-boggling rates. But for the builders, new home construction can be like riding a roller coaster. Like all cities in the United States, San Antonio (ranked nationally as the seventh-largest in population and boasting the fourth-largest new home market) and its residential building industry haven’t been immune from the inherent, financially driven boom-and-bust cycles that have always affected areas within the national economy.

As evidence, after a record high of more than 19,000 housing starts in San Antonio during the heady times of 2006, new lows were soon to follow in the leaner years of 2008 through 2011, when the same fell by two-thirds. Fortunately, Texas and especially San Antonio, thanks to military expansion, the Eagle Ford Shale play and other factors, were somewhat sheltered

from the nationwide downturn and, as a result, have rebounded more quickly than other parts of the country.

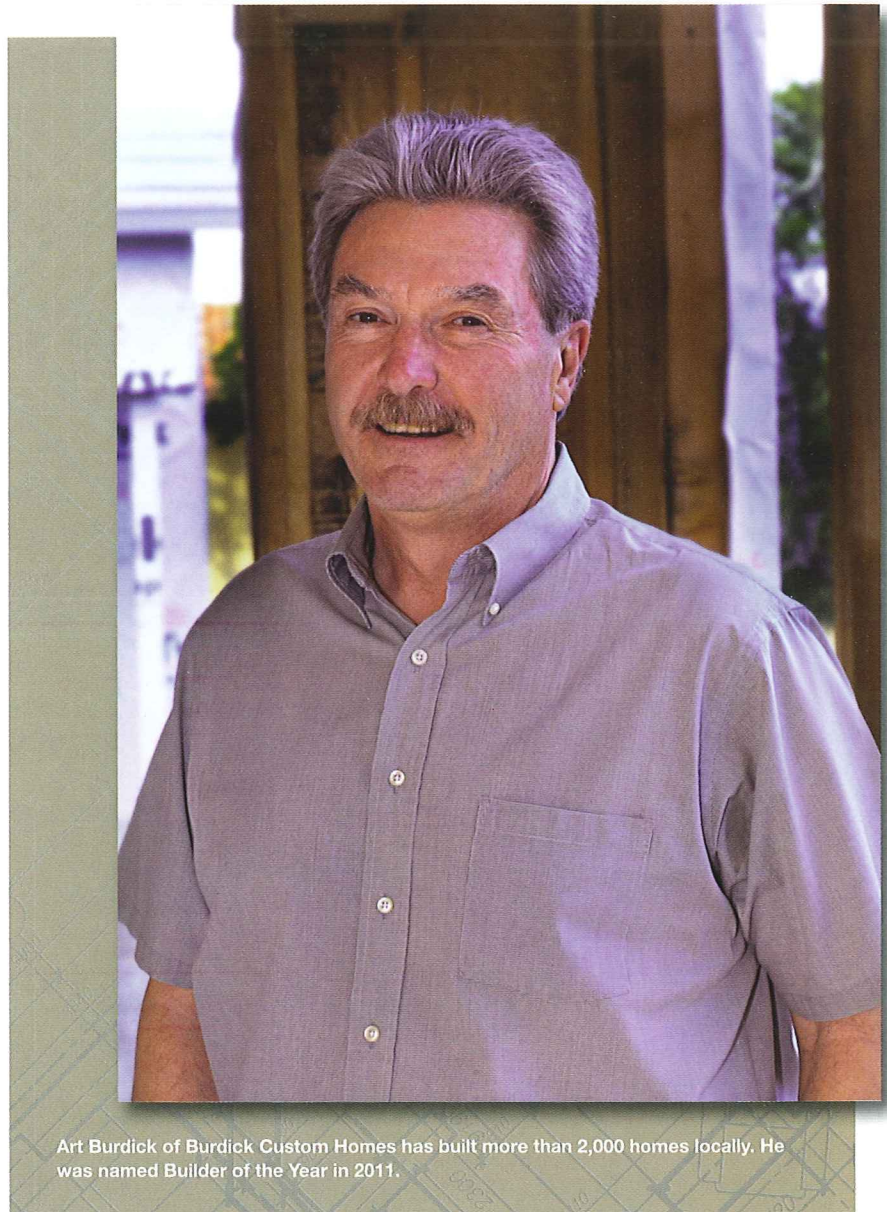
In 2012 the city reported an acceptable 8,077 housing starts. This year, more than 9,000 are eagerly anticipated (source: Metrostudy). The market appears to be on the rebound. But thanks to a top-notch building industry driven by a cadre of professionals who meticulously oversee every detail essential to the inception and completion of highly prized, value-sustaining, expertly fabricated new housing, the consumer has many options available when seeking a newly constructed or custom home.

The following individuals, all well-established and experienced players within the local residential building trade and representing some of the city's finest firms, offer expert testimony covering various aspects of San Antonio's special, and, in many respects, unique new housing market.

### The "crash"

After 40 years as a builder, Art Burdick, founder and president of Burdick Custom Homes, has seen it all regarding the ups and downs of new home construction. SAN ANTONIO MAN wanted to know what he thinks about the latest downturn, which struck the nation, Texas and San Antonio in 2007/2008.

He offers, "Our city was fairly unique in that we didn't have a huge price run-up prior to the downturn; therefore prices didn't retreat much. The equity owners had accrued didn't evaporate. This allowed our new home market to remain somewhat stable during these turbulent years. However, others factors, such as the loss of AT&T (including many of its suppliers), did negatively impact home building. Fortunately, San Antonio remains a fairly strong market, thanks to our lower housing costs and high standard of living. For example, many re-



Art Burdick of Burdick Custom Homes has built more than 2,000 homes locally. He was named Builder of the Year in 2011.

tires are attracted to the area since they can sell a 'mid-range' home in another city and upgrade to a luxury home here for the same price. All in all, we've been better off than many other areas."

Burdick has been heavily involved in the San Antonio building industry since 1972. In 1982 he was recognized nationally as one of the Outstanding Young Builders. In 1981, he was elected president of the Greater San Antonio Builders Association, and in 2011, was named by that association the Builder of the Year. He established Burdick Custom

Homes in 1989 and over his career has built more than 2,000 local homes.

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