

# Homearama: All 10 topping \$1 million apiece this year

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"We're excited," Sonia Myles, owner of a Kurlmann home, said. She and her husband, Kenneth, are relocating from Boston for jobs with Procter & Gamble with sons Kendall, 10, and Jordan, 8. They first saw the home completed Thursday.

After Homearama ends June 25, "they'll make sure everything is in move-in condition," Myles said - scuff marks erased, plaster patched, the public's wrongdoings righted.

"At first, I was apprehensive because people coming through might not treat (the home) with kid gloves," said Vanessa Street, moving home to Cincinnati from Nashville with husband, Brian, after buying the Artisan Estate Homes entry.

"We've come to appreciate Rick (Seitz of Artisan Estate Homes) and how much he loves what he does, so we wanted to show it off. Having people see how excellent they are at what they do - that took off any pressure we were feeling at first.

"I want his business to be as blessed as we were blessed to find him. We want to share. And I'm sure it's nothing that can't be cleaned up. He (Seitz) said they would put ropes up and fix anything that happens," said Street, who first saw the house during its framing stage in mid-March.

Any last-minute show jitters are quieted by comforting thoughts of how much money these owners saved in buying a show house - even when shelling out \$1.2 million to \$1.99 million, this year's price range. This is the first year that the price of every Homearama house has topped \$1 million since the event started in 1962.

The 10 Homearama homes, averaging 6,950 square feet, come "loaded" with appliance and design upgrades that would cost a non-Homearama buyer thousands.

"You can't reproduce these homes for the price you can buy them for at Homearama because of all the vendor discounts," said Dan DeStefano of DeStefano Custom Builders, president of the Home Builders of Greater Cincinnati. "You get turnkey equity in the hundreds of thousands of dollars."

## What this house would cost you a month



Photos by Cara Owsley/The Enquirer

The DeStefano Custom Builders house stands ready for the Homearama hordes starting Saturday. It's still available for purchase.

Interested in buying Homearama's most-expensive entry, the \$1,998 million Elizabeth Hall by DeStefano Custom Builders? Here's a typical mortgage scenario:

- **Down payment (20 percent):** \$399,600.
- **Amount financed:** \$1,598,400.
- **Loan:** 30-year fixed mortgage at 6.64 percent (average as of Thursday).
- **Monthly payment:** \$10,251 - plus taxes and insurance.

— Alex Coolidge

"We probably have \$100,000 in discounts," builder Seitz estimated. When you add the extra services of interior designers and artisans, the figure easily can double. A designer at \$50-\$75 an hour working two months of 40-hour weeks on a home is worth \$16,000-\$24,000 alone, Cindy Carrelli of Design Destination by Furniture Fair said.

Homearama buyers, if they sign on the dotted line early enough, can pick paint colors, cabinet finishes, fabrics and so on with an interior designer, assigned by the builder, at their elbow.

Fortunately, the Myles and Street families lucked into compatible interior designers - Interiors by Nancy Paul and Julie Bell, and Nancy Bonar's Interiors by Design, respectively, so much so that Street said she "left the majority of the decisions up to them."

Because the homes are show-cases for builders and everyone whose merchandise or work is seen in the show, upgrades are the norm on everything from home entertainment systems to lighting fixtures and windows.

And after the show, homeowners get first pick of furniture and accessories, again at deep discounts.

"Furniture in the house is discounted 20-40 percent, with an additional 10 percent off for the homeowners," said Sheri Mitchell of Verburg's Furniture, seen in the Artisan Estate Homes entry this year.

"Sometimes, the hardwood-floor guy throws in inlays at no extra cost to show his work, or a plumber will throw in a whirlpool bathtub," said designer Amy Holt of Interiors by Nancy Paul and Julie Bell. "I was standing in one home, and a company came in and offered all the wainscot paneling at no charge. Of course, (owners) had to pay for the labor, but that's a tremendous savings."

Said Carrelli: "Usually, the builder has allowances for certain things included in the home's price," such as window coverings or faux paint, then the homeowner gets a break on anything on top of that.

And interior designers often pass on perks from their vendors.

"For example, I have giant nail-head trim on a window treatment, and I said to the supplier, 'Why don't you just donate that,' and he said 'Fine,'" Carrelli said.

"Discounts are all over the board" for Homearama home buyers, Holt said - a lot of icing on a very fancy cake.

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