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Online Tool Eases Buyers' Selection Process

To make buying a new home easier, Gladstone Homes has developed a state-of-the-art Web-based design selections tool that customers can use from the comfort of their current homes. While some area builders have placed aside the traditional checklist pad and pencil and updated to computer-based selections in their design centers, Gladstone has gone a step further with its online Gladstone Home Designer.

"Building a new house is very exciting," said interior designer Marcia Burns, Gladstone's design center coordinator. "But there are a lot of choices and for some people that can be stressful. This is one way we make it more enjoyable."

The Gladstone Home Designer does not replace the traditional design selections meeting. It offers buyers the opportunity to experiment with different combinations of materials, designs and colors for their new homes, and see the costs of those selections.

"A lot of customers have a much easier time or are more in agreement about selecting a floor plan than selecting a countertop, color scheme or faucet style," Burns said. "A family has to live with these choices so we want to give them every opportunity to weigh options and be completely thrilled."

The Gladstone Home Designer contains pre-priced click options providing a full range of personalization to home buyers, while displaying a running total of option costs. It takes the guess-work out of selections, allowing home buyers to consider options in the privacy of their own homes and within the realities of their individual budgets.

For each floor plan, the Gladstone Home Designer catalogs a comprehensive list of hundreds of available options. For example, a buyer can add in-law arrangements, an optional private bath, skylights, stainless steel appliances or a wet bar – and even can choose exterior selections such as brick color, siding selections, roof style and color, and front door styles – all with just a click.

Aesthetic and functional design elements can be selected with the Gladstone Home Designer. Custom flooring choices, such as carpeting, hardwood selections, and designer tile options are displayed on screen, as are paint color choices; cabinet styles with available woods, stains and hardware; appliances; fixtures such as faucets and door knobs.

Most customers use the online tool to narrow choices before meeting with Burns at Gladstone's new design showroom in North Aurora.

"Before, some customers simply were overwhelmed when we met," Burns said. "Now, they review the options available for their home at their own pace, and come to me feeling a lot more confident about their choices because they've had the opportunity to process all of the selections."

Customers who've used the tool agree.

"The Gladstone Home Designer offered us the opportunity to discuss and debate the options we wanted and could afford in the privacy of our own home," said Kristen Otterness who, with her husband Kevin, purchased a Gladstone home. "We had a wish list, of course, but we knew we had to keep an eye on costs also, and the site helped us do that."

The couple chose Gladstone's 4,043 square-foot Ashstone plan featuring a private courtyard entertainment area with two entrances – one leading to the foyer and another to a home office.

They chose stamped concrete flooring and the outdoor fireplace option for their courtyard.

“The online system helped us make certain decisions before we even met with Marcia, and she provided hands-on guidance at our appointment,” said Kristen. “Having the site available to us beforehand was helpful.”

Inside, Kristen and Kevin selected kitchen features such as maple raised-panel cabinetry accents including two-piece rope crown, cabinet hardware and a glass-front cabinet, and granite countertops.

They also chose optional vaulted and tray ceilings in several rooms

The Gladstone Home Designer is composed of two parts: a custom floor plan

designer program and a design options selection tool. Currently the full version of the Gladstone Home Designer is accessible to contracted customers who are given a username and password.

All visitors to the Gladstone Homes Web site, www.gladstonehome.com, can experiment with the custom floor plan designer, changing or adding available room configurations to create their own unique home. There is even a built-in tutorial to explain the many options available and prompt users through the Gladstone Home Designer program.

On-site demonstrations of the tool also are available at any of Gladstone Homes' seven sales centers in North Aurora, Plainfield and Yorkville.

For sales center locations and more information on the Gladstone Home Designer, visit www.gladstonehome.com or call 630-428-4000.

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