

Affordability? It's all in the eye of the buyer

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The new construction at 2314 Castleman sold last week for \$1,365,000 after Brent Morris of Parks listed the home for \$1,395,000. Morris has developed a niche in locating infill lots and teardowns – to use the plural of the now-popular noun created by adding verb to adverb – in the Green Hills area.

Lydia Armistead and Brent sold this house last week with its 4,950 square feet near the corner of Castleman and Trimble, once an area of 1,600- to 2,500-square-foot ranch style houses. Now the neighborhood boasts the palaces of Music City royalty with a King of Leon on one end and a multiple CMA songwriter of the year on the other.



Lydia is a brilliant, perennially successful Realtor who evokes awe and wonder by balancing her spectacular career and being married to the larger-than-life Big George Armistead, a Nashville icon.

This home is smaller than those of the music stars but follows the formula that has led to the supernatural success of any of a number of Nashville developers as they cater to the lifestyle that has evolved in this booming real estate market.

One developer has taken a “let them eat cake” philosophy when asked about the demolition of the area’s affordable housing to give way to these marvelous structures: “Everything is affordable to someone,” he quips.

As the poet William Cowper wrote: “Variety’s the very spice of life that gives it all its flavor.” And without the big houses, there will be no affordable houses, since the economy would halt. So, keep them coming. Leave a little something for the up-and-comers.

In order to justify the acquisition expense, these McSomethings, as they are mansions no more by today’s standards, must include high ceilings, first-floor master suites, four or five bedrooms and at least as many full baths with a couple of half baths sprinkled in for good measure.

The floors are oak of the fallen tree variety – no oak skin laminate glued to macro substances fashioned by Lennon’s plasticine porters.

And the walls must stretch 10 feet to the ceilings on the first floor and usually nine on the second, all while the homes tout their royal greenness with the double-, even triple- now, paned windows and tankless water heaters.

Ice makers are about the houses, as well. They last about two years, and repairing them is more expensive than replacing them. They aren’t called cold water freezers, but that’s what they do, I suppose. Making ice 24/7. Tough job. They put in their time and pass on.

It is most important that the children upstairs are able to access bathrooms directly from their rooms and that their rooms house separate closets, preferably spaces with references to California as, from all that I can gather, the other 49 states and 316 counties have failed miserably at the art of designing closets.

The kitchen counter surfaces are getting exciting. Remember when Formica abdicated its throne to Corian, which gave way to marble, then to granite? Now there is leather granite and honed Brazilian granite and soapstone.



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Anyway, the tops du jour will glisten and reflect the stainless steel appliances with the eight-burner gas stoves in the “gourmet” kitchens.

It has been reported that 83 people move to Nashville each day, and at least half of them are apparently gourmets. It's no wonder Sunset Grill closed.

Another thing about these gourmets – they cook outside. All the time. So, the need for outdoor kitchens, and not a grill. To them, grills are for barbecuing.

While Nashvillians have reserved the word barbecue as a noun for the result of delicately seasoning a meaty section of a farm animal and grilling it over warm coals, those migrating here think grills are for amateurs and refer to the art of grilling as barbecuing.

They need a kitchen, and their kitchens need eggs, and not the hopeful offspring of chicken either. These eggs are oval shaped – hence the name – cooking devices that can bake at an exact temperature combining the best of modern technology and ancient cooking.

Additionally, the outdoor chefs need beer, and lots of it, which means kegerators and outdoor refrigerators. And lest we forget the appropriate number of drawers and storage for the outdoor cookware along with space for wine coolers and warming drawers.

Houses are getting smarter by the day, and are seemingly months away from helping Stephen Hawking develop the formula for the origin of the home.

With James Hardie's planks and boards and synthetic slate roofs, these houses will be there when Garth Brooks' grandchildren release his 100 year anniversary box set with 3 “live from heaven” bonus tracks.

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