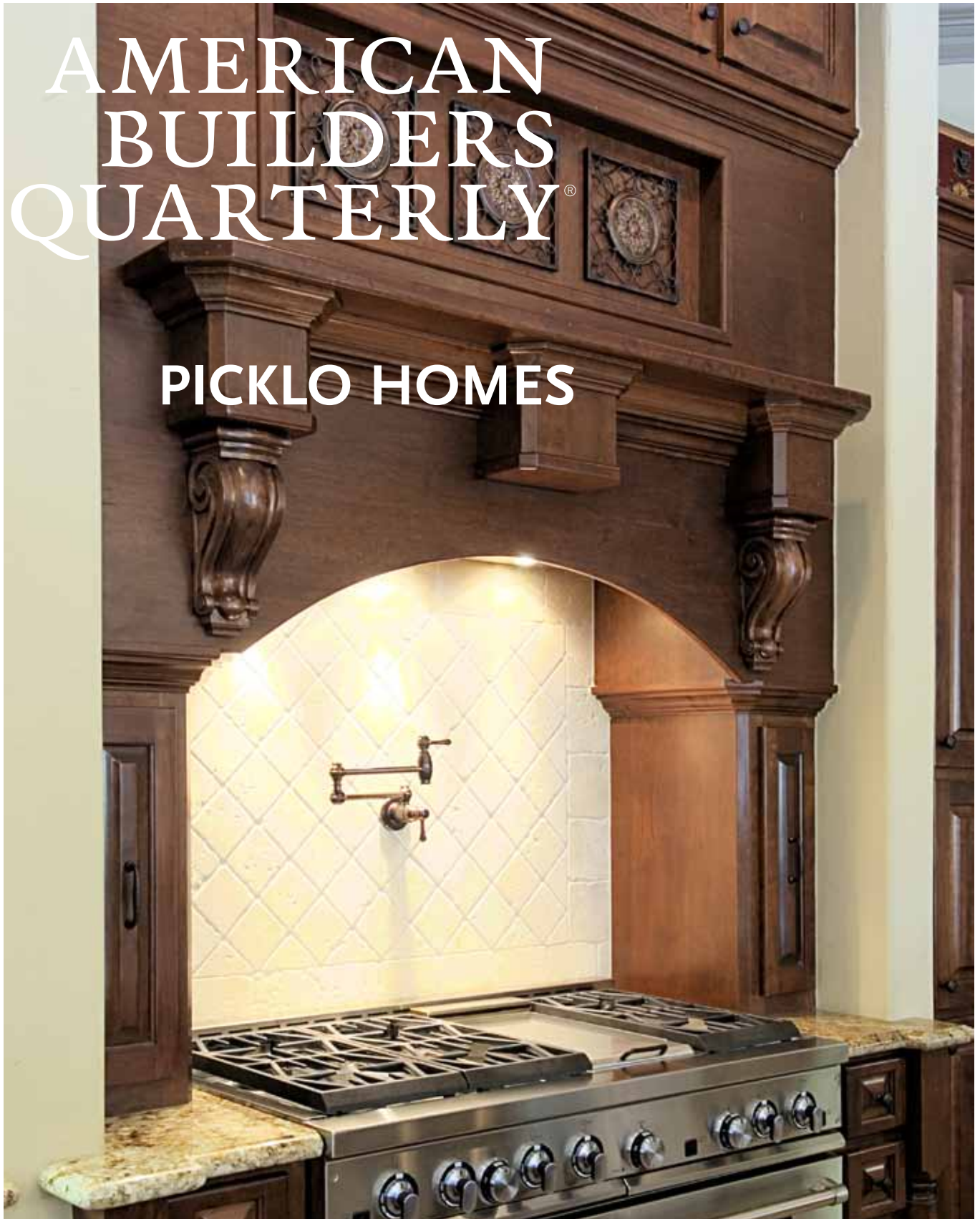


AMERICAN BUILDERS QUARTERLY®

PICKLO HOMES





PICKLO HOMES

Family-run residential builder is well positioned for an economic upturn

BY RUSS KLETTKE

NICK PICKLO BELIEVES THE CURRENT RECESSION can be a positive turning point for builders, as well as homebuyers. One may wonder how, but the premise becomes much clearer when one sees it from the perspective of Nick's father, Terry Picklo, whom founded Houston-based Picklo Homes in 1981, when it was known as Country Builders Inc. "During the 1980s building bust, my father learned a lot," says Nick, who serves as vice president. "We survived at that time by swiftly eliminating any on-hand inventory, and by paying off debt as quickly as possible. From that point on, we have been a contract-based custom builder only." By not building model or speculative homes, the firm carries far less financial risk. It also maintains the capital necessary to build continuously throughout an economic downturn, working only with clients whom have the financing necessary to sign a contract.

Nick sees low home sales as good for both the industry and future homebuyers alike, as the forces of "economic natural selection" are in play: only the strongest will survive. "Competition is good, but I'm referencing the right kind of competition," Nick says. "We need to

compete against other builders that are on our same level. This pushes us to be a better builder. When the economy fully recovers, the better, stronger builders will be there to start the building boom again. We will be one of them."

The firm has largely worked in the northwest area of Houston, but it is expanding its territory further north and west, as well as to more outlying markets in Texas, including College Station, Brenham, Livingston, and Hunstville. The firm has also altered the custom-home model a bit, offering prepackaged, prepriced plans that, "if nothing else, helps qualify clients and gives them a base or starting point," Nick says.

Despite any perceived stigma, it would hardly be a compromise for a homebuyer to select a "used" design. The traditional, contemporary, and transitional themes that Picklo Homes utilizes provide a robust selection. Terry champions classic features, while Nick is versed in more contemporary approaches to homebuilding. Nick's preference for mixing materials such as stone, slate, granite, and stained cedar shingles accomplishes "cohesion," he

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
HOUSTON, TX
FOUNDED:
1982
EMPLOYEES:
3
AVERAGE ANNUAL SALES:
\$5-6 MILLION

Curb appeal is an important part of Picklo Homes' design. A combination of several styles is perfect as long as they blend seamlessly. This home features a mix of Asian, Mediterranean, and Traditional styling.



Owner Terry Picklo (left) with son Nick, vice president.

says, providing “an aesthetic advantage that blends different layers and textures, creating a noteworthy palate.” Interior allowances include wood, slate, marble, or stained concrete floors, and solid-surface counters in kitchens and baths for homes that range in price from \$200,000 to \$2 million.

While the surface features are sumptuous, Picklo Homes does not skimp on the mechanical components or the behind-the-scenes actions. As standard features, Picklo Homes offers third-party inspections, AQUAPEX plumbing, and engineered foundations. And Nick states that while green features are rarely requested, homebuyers are eager to hear about energy-cost savings made possible by systems and materials in Picklo Homes. Open-cell spray-foam insulation, tankless water heaters, highly efficient HVAC components, and energy-efficient frame construction are just a few examples of products and practices used by Picklo Homes to enable its clients' homes to be Energy Star qualified (20–30 percent more efficient than standard homes). The firm is also able to project annual utility costs to buyers—something of particular value to clients who are nearing retirement and will be on a fixed income.

The physical end-product of its work is important, of

course. But the key ingredients that have enabled the family-owned firm to survive the boom-bust cycles in the Houston area are less tangible. They include:

- **FINANCIAL STABILITY:** The firm builds to suit buyers; therefore, it is never overextended.
- **RESPECT:** As a general contractor, Picklo Homes refers to subcontractors as “trade partners,” says Nick, explaining how they are “an integral part of quality control.” Many of these partners have a 20-year relationship with the Picklos.
- **CONSISTENCY:** With experienced suppliers, a steady approach and long-standing position in the industry, customers of Picklo Homes can be confident of getting the house they contracted for.

The consistency factor is illustrated by the firm's workload in 2009 and early 2010, as Picklo Homes has tripled its remodeling work. However, this may soon change: the Houston market is showing an uptick in housing starts, reports the *Houston Chronicle*, with as many as 20,000 new homes expected to be built in 2010. For builders who have weathered the recession intact, the quality construction Picklo Homes provides may set the benchmark. ABQ



Left: Picklo Homes' use of woods, concrete, and natural stone adds texture and visual appeal to this dining room.

WISEBAKER BUILDER SERVICES, INC.

Since 1970, Wisenbaker Builder Services has served Texas homebuilders with superior flooring, countertop, and window-covering products. Guided by two enduring principles—integrity and reliability—Wisenbaker is known in the builder market as a true advocate for product quality. For more information, visit us at www.wisenbaker.com.

A collage of four images showcasing custom homes. The top-left image shows a living room with a stone fireplace and leather seating. The top-right image shows a staircase with a curved railing. The bottom-left image shows a living room with a large sofa and a ceiling fan. The bottom-right image shows the exterior of a large, multi-story house with a green lawn.

At Picklo Homes, we're a family-owned business specializing in custom homes. We're proud to have built nearly 500 unique homes in the last 29 years, no two alike. We are a full-service Design/Build firm and Certified Graduate Builder, and offer real estate services directly through Picklo Realty. For more information on how we can assist you with your next project, contact us today.

PICKLO *ph* HOMES
Dream. Design. Build.



WWW.PICKLOHOMES.COM
281.252.4447