

Greater Kansas City Edition

# Builder/Architect



**H&S Covenant Homes:  
Double the Quality,  
Twice the Experience**

# H&S Covenant Homes: Double the Quality, Twice the Experience

By Dale Garrison

If H&S Covenant Homes sounds familiar, that's because the new company is actually the result of a merger between two of Kansas City's finest homebuilders.

H&S Builders and Covenant Homes are sister companies that have operated separately for years, while sharing the same core values. The underlying goal of this merger is to provide customers with an expanded range of homebuilding capabilities while still maintaining a high level of quality and a commitment to innovative design and construction.

"We've always had common ownership across both companies," explained Tracy Hall, Co-founder of H&S Builders and now Vice President of the new company.

"There were reasons we kept them separate. But the more we looked at them separately, the more we realized that both companies share the same philosophy and there are a number of benefits from operating as a single entity."

"Those benefits range from improved efficiencies to the use of better construction technology", noted Frank Pikus, President



A formal great room is always one of the first rooms to catch the eye upon entering an H&S Covenant home.

of H&S Covenant. "Whenever two companies merge, there will be the usual benefits of streamlining two operations," he said. "But in our case we have the unique ability to accomplish some things as a bigger and stronger entity that might be very costly for a single company to attempt. I believe this is an idea that was destined to happen."

The exterior of a lovely and unique Leawood home built for another sophisticated H&S Covenant homeowner.



## QUALITY FOUNDATION

For the past 23 years, H&S Builders has made its name building custom homes up to \$2 million in some of Johnson County's premier communities. Covenant Homes, which grew out of the H&S legacy, has quickly developed its own strong reputation by bringing luxury home quality to a more moderate price range.

Building some of the area's most impressive custom homes has come quite naturally to both H&S and Covenant Homes. However, creating awareness of the company's exceptional products is a



PHOTOS BY MARK BAILEY

**Above:** The exterior of a beautiful Prairie Village home recently completed for another discriminating H&S Covenant client.



**Left:** A good cook needs space to work in and this designer kitchen allows space and all of the modern conveniences that a chef could desire.

constant challenge. While both companies have won hundreds of loyal customers and dozens of awards, they have remained known primarily to an exclusive circle. Another key objective of this merger is to improve the way the company disseminates its message of quality and craftsmanship.

“H&S Builders, for many years has been successful building high end, custom homes,” noted John Menghini, Jr., who serves as Vice President of Marketing for the new company. “We have a tremendous reputation and a loyal following. I believe those who know H&S know what we stand for. We simply want to make more people aware of who we are and what we are capable of building.”

Effectively communicating with prospective customers is certainly crucial to the success of any business. But for H&S Covenant, the partners in the company took that goal even a step further. The company has recently partnered with Design Basics, the largest home plan design company in the nation. Within Design Basics is a division called Women-Centric Matters. Woman-Centric has conducted extensive studies and focus groups for the past six years to determine the priorities that women place in their home choices. The issue is significant because studies indicate that women, in fact, make 91 percent of the home-buying decisions.

“Design Basics has gone to great lengths to find what really interests women buyers in these homes,” John noted. “Some of the ideas are common sense, but some of their findings are very interesting, even surprising.”

For example, one discovery was that women tend to dislike entering the home from the garage into the laundry room. “It appears that women would rather not enter into the laundry room where they are immediately faced with clutter or an instant reminder of work that needs to be done,” noted Michael Menghini, General Manager of H&S Covenant. “What they prefer is to enter into a rear service area or a rear foyer, a place where you can come in, drop your keys, hang your coat, and take off your shoes. It’s a functional place that can contain the clutter rather than have it come into the rest of the house.”



Above: H&S Covenant model home in Siena of Leawood

Right: A gourmet kitchen that is both stylish and functional is the focal point of any memorable home, as seen in this H&S Covenant home.

## MORE SURPRISES

One of the most unexpected findings from Woman-Centric Matters' research is that women generally do not like to see the kitchen from the front door of the home, a trait that is often found in today's "open" floor plans. "There are a lot of designs in the market today where you can look in and see the kitchen countertops the moment you step in the front door," Michael noted. "We are attempting with the help of Design Basics and Woman-Centric to keep our floor plans open but to situate the kitchen so it is not as visible from the front door."

Another finding addresses the fact that women often view architectural plans differently than men. As a result, H&S Covenant utilizes color-coded plans that are often easier to follow and visualize. "If all closets are coded yellow, it only takes a moment to see where the closets are located and if another one is needed in a certain part of the house," Michael noted. "A lot of men like that too."

Other features are less unexpected, and many in fact have been incorporated into H&S Covenant homes for many years. Every H&S Covenant home built today includes oversized closets and extensive amounts of storage. H&S Covenant homeowners also enjoy enlarged pantries and as many as 30-40 other features that make a home supremely livable.

John Menghini stated that H&S Covenant Homes is now committed to offering the features which are essential to the Woman-Centric model in all of its homes. "We have four requirements that we will always emphasize: flexible living space, storage, de-stressing areas and entertaining areas," he noted. "There are certainly other important aspects of a home, but these are four lenses that we intend to look through to evaluate our homes."

Flexibility may be the most overlooked, although it can often

create the most impact by offering homeowners ways to customize their home. "There are a lot of different options for the various spaces within a home," Michael explained. "We often have homeowners who wish to create an optional bedroom out of their study or office. Occasionally, we have customers who use the space that would otherwise be the dining room for another purpose. We give our customers the options to use their home based on their priorities."



Storage is obviously critical in any home, and this includes not just closets but extensive emphasis on space for organization, whether it be in a garage or a bedroom.

De-stressing areas are harder to define because they can involve not only a well-thought-out master bedroom suite, but also an especially functional kitchen or a spa-like walk-in shower.

Entertaining areas may include everything from an over-sized kitchen with immediate exterior access to a screened-in porch to a lower level complete with media room and bar.

Tracy Hall noted that a number of H&S Covenant's designs have been "fine tuned" using these concepts, and several entirely new plans are being developed for roll-out with the Spring and Fall Homes Tours, making H&S Covenant the exclusive Woman-Centric builder in Johnson and Wyandotte counties. The results already are noticeable.

"You realize that to a large degree, homes have been designed by men, built by men and marketed by men, to men," Frank Pikus said. "When you look at things differently, look at them from a woman's perspective, a lot of things change."

## INNER STRENGTH

Yet many important values are constant, and overall quality is at the top of the list. "We like to build a house as if we were going to live in it ourselves," Tracy said. "We often will sound

insulate the master bedroom and bathroom in a home, so the end result for the homeowner is a more quiet, serene environment. Or we will upgrade to a thicker pad under all carpet because that is what we would do in our own home. It is not always about saving a dollar wherever possible.”

These “inside the walls” features are not always evident to prospective customers, which is one reason H&S Covenant is working very hard to communicate its level of quality to the marketplace. “A lot of builders will shy away from things that are not visible to the naked eye,” John Menghini added. “They feel as though the customers will never truly appreciate such features. We feel as though they can and do but the challenge for us is to effectively communicate these features each and every day.”

H&S Covenant Homes, in its quest to better serve its customers, has recently embarked on yet another unique initiative, and that is to build Kansas City’s first truly “healthy home.”

In the tradition of H&S Covenant’s past successes, the healthy home has evolved through listening to homebuyers. Last year, a prospective customer approached the company because they were drawn to the company’s designs and quality, but they noted that their daughters suffered from severe allergies.

“They gave us a list of what couldn’t be in the home and after looking at that, we said we can’t build it!” recalled Michael Menghini. “But that challenged us to start looking for solutions and we found a program that makes this possible.”

**A casual hearth room with soaring beamed ceilings is an H&S Covenant trademark and the ideal place to rest after a meal.**



**An elegant dining room is a necessity for that perfect dinner party or that memorable family holiday.**

PHOTOS BY MARK BALZLEY

It is called the Health House program and it is sponsored by the American Lung Association. The program was established when it was found that today’s increasingly “tight” homes may reduce energy costs, but can have adverse effects on indoor air quality.

The principals of H&S Covenant Homes completed a certification process through the American Lung Association last year and the company is now one of only 25 builders in the nation to have earned the designation as a health house builder. The company is now preparing to begin construction on Kansas City’s first Health House.

Achieving the designation is a proud accomplishment of H&S Covenant employees, but the real test will come during construction of the home when American Lung Association inspectors visit the home at least five times. They will be checking to ensure areas such as the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems are utilizing the materials required to reduce the potential for mold and to improve air quality.

H&S Covenant is currently planning to build the first Kansas City Health House in Overland Park in the Woods of Colton Lakes at 151st and Switzer. The company is also hoping to partner with a local allergist in an effort to create awareness and better communicate the availability of its healthy homes, which also happen to be Energy Star compliant.

“This is something that we feel a lot of people will have interest in,” John Menghini noted. “With so many families dealing with allergies and asthma these days, we see a real need for this type of product in the housing market. Despite the fact that building a healthy home may cost slightly more than a standard home, we are

confident that many of the costs associated with the health home can be recouped in reduced healthcare expenditures. It very well could be that over the life of owning and living in the home that it more than pays for itself."

## BEST OF THE BEST

The H&S Covenant history already includes homes in some of the finest subdivisions in the area. Currently, the company is a featured builder in Siena of Leawood, Eagle Pointe, Colton Lakes, The Woods at Colton Lake, Deerbrook, Coffee Creek Crossing, Patrician Village, Wheatley Place, Wheatley Farm, Wheatley, Ironhorse, The Links at Lionsgate and many more.

The company has also built upper bracket homes at Lake of the Ozarks in southern Missouri. These luxury homes are in the Villages at Shawnee Bend and Porta Cima. They are true lake living estate homes on beautiful waterfront homesites and prices begin at \$1 million.

## STILL MORE

The most unusual H&S Covenant capability may extend beyond even this complete resume. The company and its owners are frequently the developers of subdivisions in which the company builds. In communities such as Wheatley, Wheatley Place, Wheatley Farm, and Patrician Village, the principles of H&S Covenant had an ownership interest in the land used for the development.

"That's increasingly important," Frank Pikus added. "It means our business is more vertically integrated, which brings a lot of value that ultimately accrues to the consumer." H&S Covenant is currently working on three other subdivisions that are between nine months and two years from commencement. The company currently owns between 500 and 600 acres of land in Johnson County that will be developed for future residential and even commercial growth.

"We're always actively seeking new opportunities whether it be developing or building in a new subdivision or purchasing a tract of land for commercial or retail use," John Menghini noted. "We feel that our role as a homebuilder and land developer is constantly evolving and thus we will look at any opportunity that comes before us. I guess that's what makes this work so interesting."

"Keeping things interesting" might be another theme for this accomplished group. That includes not only are their outstanding homes, but even their work style. Their current offices are located on a ranch in southern Johnson County. The 40-acre site even includes a collection of ranch animals such as Texas longhorn



A well-designed master suite is the perfect place to retreat after a busy day.

PHOTO BY MARK BALTZLEY

steer, horses and donkeys. The partners of H&S Covenant admit that when they need to do some thinking, they'll walk outside and just enjoy their peaceful surroundings. The renovated farmhouse which they use as an office is also something of a showplace for the well-honed skills of H&S Covenant Homes.

Not surprisingly, H&S Covenant is an award-winning builder, with a respected presence in the Parade of Homes. Their show homes are often fully furnished and have even been purchased complete with those furnishings.

According to Frank Pikus, President of H&S Covenant, "Our clients and prospective clients can rest assured that not only is H&S Covenant a financially sound company sure to be around for many years, but that we are continually looking for new and innovative ways to construct their dream homes. And we will always seek out cutting edge opportunities to distinguish ourselves from the rest of the market."

"But our strongest attribute will always be the ability to listen to our customers," Tracy Hall concluded. "In everything we do, we believe communication with our customers is still one of our best attributes. Of course, quality of construction is paramount in all of our homes, but at the end of the day just listening to people is what allows us to be successful."



For more information on H&S Covenant Homes, call 913-681-3373, fax 913-681-2149 or visit their new website at [www.hs covenant.com](http://www.hs covenant.com). ■