

# HEIGHTS NEARTOWN

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MONTROSE | GARDEN OAKS | OLD SIXTH WARD | MIDTOWN

REAL ESTATE

VOLUNTEERS

## Subdivision shows Spain's influence

By BETTY L. MARTIN  
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

It is no accident that the white stucco walls, tiled roofs and multi-level floors of Houston's new Cáceres development appear to have been moved here from southern Spain.

The look is being enjoyed by the development's residents — both of them, so far. Janet Zurcher and her husband John, an engineer, are the first residents of the 8-acre, \$80 million subdivision.

They purchased their home, valued by the Harris County Appraisal District at more than \$648,000, on Caya Catalina Place in the Rice Military area, "because of its age-old design from Andalusian Spain right in the heart of Houston," Janet Zurcher said.

Residents who have bought but have not yet moved in will live in homes with imported-tile roofs, fourth- or fifth-story rooftop terraces, built-in hot tubs, outdoor kitchens, fireplaces and other amenities.

Features in the gated community of 121 villas and townhomes include security and access to the Galleria, Memorial, Allen Parkway and Kirby areas, Zurcher said.

Houses priced from \$600,000 to more than \$1.2 million, inspired by the whitewashed pueblos blancos of southern Spain, opened in March.

That influence came about when partners of Röhe & Wright Builders, Suite 100, 3334 Richmond Ave. — half of the building team — took a trip to Spain.

Chad Muir, Andy Suman and Pete Barthelme picked a prime location — inside the Loop, off Memorial Drive — for the development.

Muir, a 1992 graduate of Princeton University, is partner in the company with fellow 1988 Kinkaid High School graduate Suman, a Texas Christian University graduate, and Barthelme, an alum-



COURTESY CÁ CERES HOMES

**CUSTOM HOMES:** Cáceres is located on Reinerman Street in the Rice Military area.

nus of Dulles High School and the University of Houston.

For the Cáceres project, the company joined with another builder, Black Diamond, 750 Bering Drive, Suite 130.

Black Diamond's Tom Zenner and Bonner Ball also are native Houstonians.

Zenner attended Strake Jesuit College Preparatory School and Georgetown University before graduating with a master's degree in business administration from Rice University.

Bonner went to Duchesne Academy and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin.

Though the companies have competed in the Houston market, they were united in the goal to bring quality and security to the Houston development, Muir said.

"We wanted a community that would have strong external security while being very open inside," he said.

"That's why over 50 percent of the community is common space, with six parks and extra-wide roads that are almost double the typical street size (in subdivisions)," Muir said.

Zurcher said she came across the development while riding around the neighborhood with girlfriends. She returned later with her husband to check it out.

"My husband ... goes in to detail about quality and workmanship. This was top of the line," Zurcher said. "We moved in June 16 and it's been great."

The couple are avid runners and enjoy the easy access to Memorial Park and Allen Parkway paths.

Inside their four-story, 4,500-square-foot house, they like the levels and space that make the home feel comfortable and lifestyle-friendly, not cavernous.

"We don't even use the elevator," Janet Zurcher said.

Said Muir, "In Spain, every plaza had a cathedral next

to it and we climbed to the top of every single one — incredible aerial views where we could see the mix of parks, roads, roof terraces and balconies, patios.

"(In Cáceres) on 8 acres, there's room to create a sense of place and offer lots of indoor living and also pedestrian interaction."

The biggest park — an oval park three-quarters the size of a football field — features a 22-ton fountain in the center. It is illuminated by street lamps with designs similar to those that light neighborhoods in Spain.

There also are 46 trees that will be trimmed to a box-like form, another influence from southern Spain.

The homes are not only greener, Muir said, they are "cleaner and healthier" as they are built with recycled materials and include efficient lighting and tankless water heaters that provide hot water on demand, though not stored in the home.

"Not storing your hot water cuts down on utility bills and energy use," Muir said.

When the development is completed, Muir said, his company plans to return to Spain to show photos of the homes inspired by the region.

"We may just have to take the homeowners with us," he said.

### NEIGHBORHOOD HOME PRICE TRENDS

Multiple Listing Service sales statistics for single-family homes for June in the Greater Houston area are listed by Houston Chronicle neighborhood news section coverage area and are provided by the Houston Association of Realtors

| Community                  | Jun-07 Sold | Jun-08 Sold | Change | Jun-07 Median | Jun-08 Median | Change |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| Conroe                     | 259         | 205         | -20.9% | \$152,000     | \$165,000     | 8.6%   |
| Kingwood/Humble            | 440         | 330         | -25.0% | \$153,000     | \$154,500     | 0%     |
| Pasadena/Baytown           | 546         | 443         | -18.9% | \$119,000     | \$116,900     | -1.8%  |
| The Woodlands/South County | 500         | 405         | -19.0% | \$213,311     | \$230,000     | 7.8%   |
| Katy                       | 678         | 559         | -17.6% | \$150,000     | \$162,500     | 8.3%   |
| Bay Area                   | 550         | 481         | -12.6% | \$165,000     | \$170,500     | 3.3%   |
| Pearland/Friendswood/Alvin | 282         | 229         | -18.8% | \$185,787     | \$174,500     | -6.1%  |
| East End/Third Ward        | 189         | 151         | -20.1% | \$102,000     | \$80,200      | -21.4% |
| Bellaire/River Oaks/West U | 265         | 262         | -1.1%  | \$340,000     | \$333,750     | -1.8%  |
| Heights/Near town          | 258         | 238         | -7.8%  | \$271,750     | \$315,500     | 16.1%  |
| Aldine/North Houston       | 249         | 228         | -8.4%  | \$105,000     | \$88,000      | -16.2% |
| Memorial/Spring Branch     | 303         | 287         | -5.3%  | \$308,000     | \$329,000     | 6.8%   |
| Alief/Southwest            | 232         | 182         | -21.6% | \$119,997     | \$118,000     | -1.7%  |
| Spring/Klein               | 700         | 533         | -23.9% | \$150,000     | \$145,000     | -3.3%  |
| Fort Bend                  | 680         | 551         | -19.0% | \$195,000     | \$187,000     | -4.1%  |
| Cy-Fair                    | 767         | 671         | -12.5% | \$150,000     | \$149,205     | -0.5%  |
| Greater Houston Area       | 7,169       | 6,113       | -14.7% | \$160,000     | \$162,000     | 1.3%   |

Source: Houston Association of Realtors

Volunteer Houston features a variety of local volunteer opportunities in the community.

State agency seeks mentors for youths

Be a friend and mentor to a boy or girl who has been in trouble with the law.

A state agency — working to help

youngsters put their lives back on the right track — can pair volunteers with a boy or girl who will benefit tremendously from companionship and guidance.

Agency staff will provide quality training to enable volunteers to develop a constructive, caring relationship with the young person.

Time commitments can be flexible.

Readers sought for nursing home residents

Volunteers are needed to read aloud to a small group of residents at an Astrodome-area nursing home.

If you have a clear reading voice, plan on coming by to help stimulate residents' minds and keep their spirits bright.

Material read can include



### HOW TO HELP

Volunteer Houston matches individuals and groups with volunteer opportunities at local nonprofit organizations.

Phone: 713-965-0031 (Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.)

More on the Web  
[www.volunteerhouston.org](http://www.volunteerhouston.org)

inspirational passages, or pieces chosen for their entertainment value.

Visits can take place on weekdays or weekends, during the morning or afternoon.

Visually-impaired individuals await visitors

Brighten the darkness for a home-bound blind or severely visually-impaired person.

By becoming a "friendly visitor" for a United Way agency, volunteers can help one of these people continue to live with independence and dignity.

Volunteers will be paired with someone they can help with everyday chores, such as grocery shopping and reading mail.

Time contributed would be at the mutual convenience of the visually-impaired individual and the volunteer.

### WHERE TO FIND US

HEIGHTS NEARTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

P.O. Box 4260, Suite 445  
Houston, TX 77210  
Receptionist: 713-362-7932  
[neighborhoods@chron.com](mailto:neighborhoods@chron.com)  
Fax: 713-362-7552

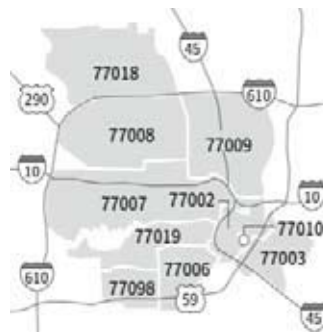
News editor  
Richard Brown  
713-362-6397  
[richard.brown@chron.com](mailto:richard.brown@chron.com)

Sports editor  
Martin Hajovsky  
713-362-3596  
[martin.hajovsky@chron.com](mailto:martin.hajovsky@chron.com)

Manager  
Howard Decker  
713-362-7932  
[howard.decker@chron.com](mailto:howard.decker@chron.com)

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