

Builder/Architect

(L to R): Rich Stone, chief financial officer, and Jeff Stone, president of Northstone Builders.

Northstone Builders

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By Ronald Boyce Walker

Competition today is as tough as it's ever been in the custom home building industry. Buyers are more discriminating, prices for building materials are surging, and the market demands both higher quality and more variety in custom home products.

Some building firms grow wary of the constant need to find ways to plan smarter, build better and serve clients more effectively.

That's not the case with Northstone Builders, a Houston-based company that relishes these challenges.

Jeff Stone, company co-owner and founder, believes these demands create

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— Jeff Stone

Custom homes by Northstone Builders are for clients who deserve the best and want to control every detail of their new home.



Northstone specializes in building in mature neighborhoods, where the beauty of the home will complement the natural beauty of the location.



PHOTO BY DAVID A. FARIAS PHOTOGRAPHY

a catalyst for excellence. “Tough competition works for us, because it forces us to stay on our toes, to be sharper and to continuously raise our standards for providing top-quality products,” Jeff said.

Northstone’s motto is “Smart Luxury for Discriminating Home Buyers.” Buyers today want homes that reflect their lifestyle and give them the quality of life they deserve. They want builders to provide specific luxury features that make these goals possible, without being burdened by ever-increasing costs.

Northstone lives up to its motto by helping clients meet these objectives through the company’s emphasis on quality — in planning, financing, construction and customer service.

“The homes we build offer the best value possible — not just in service, but in price as well. These objectives can only be achieved by making intelligent decisions that result in exceptional craftsmanship, engineering and customer satisfaction,” Jeff said.

We are financially conservative by nature, which means we don’t take large risks with our capital, and we control costs.

— Rich Stone

STONE BROTHERS’ COMPLEMENTARY TALENTS BOOST NORTHSTONE’S SUCCESS

Northstone Builders has forged a successful path in the custom home building market by capitalizing on the talents of Jeff Stone, an experienced builder, and his brother, Rich Stone, a veteran of the finance industry.

Jeff achieved success with a leading national builder for five years, winning several awards for his work in that company’s “Build-on-Your-Lot” program. He possesses in-depth knowledge of home building, as well as a keen understanding of the systems and processes needed to build efficiently and serve customers enthusiastically.

Jeff received a bachelor’s degree in Construction Management with a minor in Business Management from Brigham Young University. BYU’s nationally recognized construction management department gave Jeff a solid theoretical and practical foundation for some of the real scientific applications that impact home building, such as engineering and physics.

Rich was a banker in New York for several years, mostly financing institutional conglomerates and making markets in financial securities. The ability to understand strategy, systems and fiscal prudence was vital in that industry, and his application of these principles is crucial to Northstone Builders’ success.

Rich received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from Brigham Young University, and a master’s in Business Administration from the University of Chicago’s Graduate School of Business. These rigorous programs provided him with analytical skills that are vital to operating a business and managing a company’s finances.

All Northstone custom homes are treated as functional and interactive works of art, catering to the tastes and wishes of the discriminating buyer.





PHOTO BY DAVID A. FARIAS PHOTOGRAPHY

Northstone offers superior service and value to its clients by providing direct interaction with the company's principals.

NORTHSTONE EXCELS IN CUSTOM 'BUILD-ON-YOUR-LOT' MARKET

Northstone is active in the "Build-on-Your-Lot" market, building in Houston's finest and most mature neighborhoods.

Its custom homes typically feature two-story traditional designs averaging 4,000 to 5,000 square feet in size, and priced between \$90 to \$120 per-square-foot.

"Most of our customers are excited to know they can build a custom home without paying the typical \$150 per-square-foot price tag," Jeff said.

Northstone's approach encourages intelligent decision-making with respect to the building process, resulting in more advantageous pricing and greater value. Some of the keys are: emphasizing quality workmanship, measuring success by customer satisfaction instead of business volume, and keeping overhead low.

"As an exclusive custom builder, we will build eight to 10 homes in 2005. We're growing our business in a smart way — not just growth for growth's sake — without compromising customer service and home value," Rich said. "Before accepting a job, we carefully evaluate the opportunity to make sure we can deliver on our promises. That keeps the number of homes we build to a manageable level and allows us to provide the service our customers deserve."

"Our size allows us to stay focused on what the customer wants, and that's how we've built a strong reputation in the industry. Our customers

Most of our customers are excited to know they can have a custom home built without paying the typical \$150 per-square-foot price tag.

— Jeff Stone

realize that building with Northstone is the smart thing to do for their families, because they'll get our personal attention through the entire process," Jeff said.

HOME BUILDING CRAFTSMANSHIP IS THE FOUNDATION OF NORTHSTONE'S SUCCESS

The foundation of Northstone's success is its quest for outstanding building craftsmanship.

"Excellent craftsmanship is reflected in the array of details and individual nuances that come together to yield a beautiful finished product," Jeff said.

He adds, "A well-crafted home design is not just a work of art meant for observing. It's a practical, functional masterpiece that gets used."

Rich sees the objective from a different, but equally important vantage point. "We are financially conservative by nature, which means we don't take large risks with our capital, and we control costs."

He adds, "We discipline ourselves to budget time and resources prudently. That discipline is contagious with subcontractors and vendors."

NORTHSTONE KEEPS UP WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY, TRENDS FOR BUILDING

While it's important to have a forward-thinking philosophy, Northstone's progress could not be achieved without taking advantage of new technology in construction materials, building techniques and in-house operations.

"We're constantly improving our processes and are learning about the latest and greatest building techniques," Jeff said. "If it's out there and it makes a home better or more cost-effective for our customers, we're going to find out all about it, and evaluate it to make sure any changes in our building processes ultimately provide extra value for our customers."

Northstone will be implementing a new user-friendly, Web-based application that enhances their interaction with clients. The program offers buyers their own customized site through Northstone's customer-centric portal, myNorthstonehome.com.

Jeff explains: “This program dramatically simplifies the building process for each customer. They can make their option selections online with a simple ‘click’ of their mouse.” He adds: “Customers can also receive e-mail alerts reminding them when various decisions need to be made. It’s another way we keep the communication going with our buyers, so they get the service they expect.”

A key benefit of this program is that home buyers can keep up with the progress of their home’s construction without taking time from their busy schedule to get information via telephone.

“Of course, this technology never takes the place of one-on-one meetings, but it’s a great way for customers to keep up to date and know that their homes are coming together just as they intended,” Jeff said.

NORTHSTONE PRINCIPALS FOCUS ON FAMILY TO KEEP PERSPECTIVE

Northstone Builders is led by two men who love their work and value their families.

“We go to sleep at night thinking, ‘I can’t wait to get up and work tomorrow,’” Rich said. “Hard work is essential to succeed in this business, and since we love what we do, the hard work is fun for us.”

Jeff comments: “It’s important to love what you do, and that’s especially

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— Rich Stone

true in home building. It’s a very demanding pursuit that combines a craft with managing the many different aspects of running an entire business and servicing clients. But we truly love what we do, and that inspires us to work harder and have more fun. As a result, we get much better at what we do every day.”

Meeting these demands would be impossible without family support — something that Jeff and Rich both regard as crucial.

“My biggest challenge is balancing the demands of my passion for home building with my love of family. I have four young children and a beautiful wife who are very supportive of Northstone, and they are my first priority. They’re the reason I’m doing all of this, and why delivering on our promises to our clients is so important,” Jeff said.

For more information about Northstone Builders, visit www.northstonebuilders.com or call (713) 973-0700. Company offices are located at 9039 Katy Fwy., Suite 536 in west Houston. ■

Homeowners are impressed by the level of detail and attention to surroundings in every home Northstone builds.

