

Living extra-large Clintonville couple building house of dreams

Sunday, August 27, 2006
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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Gary Davis knows some people will think his 11,000-square-foot house is ostentatious.

The two-story home, spanning two lots, will be almost five times as large as the average 2,230-square-foot home on the Clintonville street. It also will stand out as a Bexley-style mansion among 1960s-era ranches.

"We wanted a home like you would find in old Arlington or Beechwood or Bexley, but we wanted it in Clintonville," Davis said.

"If it had been out there, we would have bought it," said his wife, Pat Kearns-Davis. "But since it wasn't, we put it together."

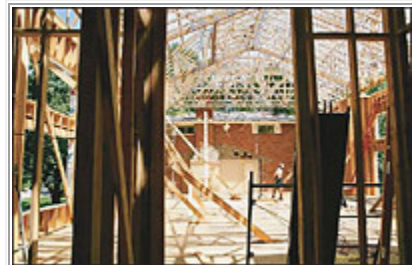
The couple, who has lived for 12 years in a walkout ranch next to Whetstone Park, bought the house next door and are joining the two with a 2,000-square-foot addition.

The space will include 7,733 square feet on the first floor, 2,004 on the second floor, and at least 2,000 square feet of finished space in the lower level, said architect Dan Keiser, principal architect of the Keiser Design Group in Gahanna.

The Davises say they are creating a home suited to their frequent family gatherings of 40 to 50 people, neighborhood parties and community fundraisers. It also will provide a first-floor mother-in-law suite to accommodate aging parents. With the purchase of the neighboring property, the family also acquired a swimming pool and room for backyard entertaining — a bonus for their five children, ages 12 to 24.

"There are always 12 to 15 people at our house besides the kids," Kearns-Davis said.

Kearns-Davis, a real-estate broker based in Clintonville, is a Bexley native and has long wanted a larger two-story traditional home with a stone exterior, her husband said. The couple also wanted a first-floor area large enough for family gatherings.



Andras Vasko of Italiano Developers Ltd. inspects the addition that will join the two houses together on Croswell Road.



Gary Davis, left, and his brother-in-law, Keith Klingenberg, check the progress on the Davis home.



Four photos pieced together show the construction under way to combine two homes in Clintonville.



An architect's rendering depicts the appearance of the Davis home once it is completed.

"My wife is one of seven brothers and sisters. They all live in Columbus," Davis said. "We get together for birthdays and holidays, and that's 40 to 50 people."

"We love Clintonville — the schools, the park, the churches, the neighborhood businesses. (Bishop Watterson High School) is less than a mile away. It is a short drive to Ohio Stadium. I'm a very big Buckeye fan."

The neighborhood also is central to Kearns-Davis' office and the apartment buildings Davis renovates and owns in Clintonville, Grandview Heights and Upper Arlington.

"We overlook the trees in the park. I counted 40 mature trees on this lot," Davis said. "There were a lot of little things like that. We just couldn't see living in a suburb."

The couple had considered enlarging their house, which OSU once owned to house the university president. The position of the house on a corner lot at Croswell Road and Olentangy Boulevard, however, left scant room for a first-floor addition.

Construction was not possible in the large front yard facing Olentangy Boulevard because a city sewer trunk line passes through the property, Davis said.

"When the neighbors decided to sell their house with a backyard pool, I said, 'OK, let's take a look at this project,' " he said.

Putting it together presented some challenges, Keiser said.

The two houses were not in alignment, and the house they purchased was uphill from the original Davis home. There was a 2-foot difference in elevation between the foundations and first floors.

The owners wanted neither steps nor even disguised ramping between the three sections of the home, Keiser said.

They did, however, agree to tearing down their original home to the foundation and starting over.

The first floors in the western and center portions of the redesigned home will be built at the same elevation as the existing eastern section. The walls and roof also are being raised to match the two-story profile of the eastern section.

One section of the new footer had to be dug by hand because it was deeper than the adjacent footer of the existing two-story house, Keiser said.

"The two houses, independently, were very different styles," Keiser said. "The Davises were open to allowing us to create a new focal point."

The main entry will be centered on the north side of the home facing Croswell Road. The Davis home had faced Olentangy Boulevard.

"That is the glue that ties it together," he said.

The stone front, bay windows and other architectural elements will create a style that's "close to French country, with elements of English Tudor," Keiser said.

The western and center sections will have vaulted ceilings instead of a second floor. Those portions of the home will include the great room and kitchen, the foyer, a formal dining room and a first-floor master suite.

The eastern end of the home will feature a first-floor suite with a sitting room, laundry and bedroom with a walk-in closet and bath — all designed to accommodate walkers or wheelchairs. There also will be an office for Kearns-Davis and a computer nook for the children.

The upstairs will house three bedrooms and three baths and a sitting room.

Construction started in May. Davis said he is eager to have enough of the exterior finished so that neighbors and others will see that the finished home has uniform design.

"I didn't want people to look at this later and say, 'They took two houses and stuck them together.' "

It will look like a very large and different home from others in the neighborhood.

"We considered whether it will fit the neighborhood," Davis said. "I like the neighbors. It's been a good relationship for 12 years."

Kearns-Davis said the project received the blessing of the previous owners.

Some neighbors were surprised but not troubled by the size and style of the renovated home.

"It's big. It's huge," said Peg Mosher, whose ranch house is across the street from the Davis home. "It won't quite fit the neighborhood. But as long as it is well done and tastefully done, it probably will be OK.

"It probably will increase our property values."

Keiser said that the house is suitable for the corner property at the end of a street bordering the park.

"It's a unique location," he said.

The architect, however, said he did talk to his customers about his concern that the resale value of the home might be less than their investment.

The Franklin County auditor last year appraised the Davis house at \$661,000 and the property they purchased at \$578,000.

"I'm very secure in what we are doing," Kearns-Davis said when asked about the possibility of owning an overimproved property.

Davis declined to reveal the expected cost of the project.

"The costs are always more than you figure," he said. "Maybe in 20 years, it will be worth to someone what we have put into it.

"Pat and I have no plans to ever move. This is what she's worked for, for more than 25 years. And she often works 12 and 14 hours a day.

"She's always wanted a nice, traditional home."