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Teamwork leads to success at 1414 S. Osprey Ave.

By Harold Bubil , Herald-Tribune / Sunday, March 29, 2015 [Follow](#)

The new modern house at 1414 S. Osprey Ave. in Sarasota has just 2,400 square feet, but it was planned as if it were twice that size.

Howard Davis, developer of the infill speculative project, said he and his team spent months studying the market, having focus groups and discussing the budget and program.

THE PHOTO GALLERY

“After two years and our 20th meeting,” Davis recalled, “I said to the guys, ‘The amount of intellectual capital we’ve invested in one house is probably without parallel for a house in Sarasota.’”

“We thought it through, and worked through concept after concept, and really wanted to do something that was different.”



The kitchen of a spec house by Chris Leader and Josh Wynne at 1414 S. Osprey Ave. in Sarasota. Priced at \$950,000, the modern house went under contract less than a month after being listed for sale. Staff photo / Harold Bubil; 3-214-2015.

The result was a \$950,000 property, within easy walking distance of the Southside Village shopping and dining district, with distinctive “soft modern” architecture. And perhaps because of the planning, it has gone under contract less than a month after coming on the market.

Davis, a developer of major commercial and government projects in New England, including Boston’s mammoth convention center, hired designers Chris Leader (house), Tim Borden (landscape), Punit Patel (interiors) and contractor Josh Wynne to construct 1414 S. Osprey as a prototype for a

dwelling that is unique to the local market.

“I bought the lot thinking Sarasota was ready for a different kind of house,” Davis said. “The genesis was to do something that was modern, but warm, which you see with the colors and landscape. More accessible and easier for people to associate with than a strictly modern house.”

Encouraged by the quick sale, Davis expects to build three more such houses on contiguous lots he owns elsewhere in town, where land prices are not being bid to “unreasonable levels.”

Those houses will be built for the same buyers to whom 1414 S. Osprey was targeted. Such buyers, Davis and his team agreed, want:

- Walkability to shops, restaurants and other amenities.
- Quality construction with an affordable price tag and flexible floor plans.
- A secure, easy-to-care-for home.
- A “Florida” home that is designed to reflect its site, neighborhood and climate.
- An energy-efficient house that saves money and has a low impact on the environment.
- A house that enriches their lives with good, modern design, light-filled spaces and indoor-outdoor connections.



Chris Leader designed the modern spec house at 1414 S. Osprey Ave. in Sarasota. Staff photo / Harold Bubil: 3-24-2015.

The house, on two stories in order to accommodate 2,400 square feet of living space within city regulations on just a 5,000-square-foot lot, has three bedrooms and two baths. It is up for Platinum certification by the Florida Green Building Coalition because of the insulated, impact-resistant windows and other green methods and materials that yielded a HERS index of 56. The Florida code minimum is 100, so this house is 44 percent more efficient than a house built only to code.

“The floor plan is more efficient, too,” said Leader.

“The primary goal was to deliver a contemporary home to market, that was immediately available, well-scaled for the neighborhood, was a great value, and had a great, unique design flavor,” said Wynne.

“We tried to use materials you would find elsewhere in the neighborhood and be respectful of the tight site and the scale of the area.”

Wynne added, “We were getting a lot of callers looking for a house available for purchase, followed by complaints of no inventory of contemporary homes in infill neighborhoods. This house was our first response.

“You could call it a market test.”

For Davis, the project was an opportunity to build a small project as efficiently as possible after 30 years of building

big projects.

After growing up in the Miami area, Davis retained his appreciation for Florida as he built his career up north.

Eventually, he and his wife, Sherry, became “enamored” of Sarasota and bought a ranch house on Siesta Key that is being remodeled with Leader’s designs.

“This is moving back to where I began my career in the 1980s with a development in Tampa,” Davis said. “I went to architecture school, urban planning school and law school with a real estate orientation.

“I was always interested in doing some things down there, even though I spent 30 years in New England.”

Davis’ development company, Latitude 27, is looking for more opportunities.

“We talked about a prototype house, and taking it to the marketplace to get reactions from potential buyers and neighbors and see whether these ideas that we thought made sense, were appealing and attractive to others outside our group,” Davis said.

“I think we have had a resounding ‘yes’ in response to that question. Hundreds of people have gone through the house, and we have paid close attention to what people have said and see what works well and things we can do better.

“The idea is to take the lessons learned and apply them to houses 2, 3, and 4.”

But those new projects will not be in the same area as House 1, which is on pricey land in the much-desired West of the Trail area.

“Land costs have gone up,” Davis said. “We will take the basic DNA and apply that to a more affordable and accessible version of the house in emerging neighborhoods. Or, take the concepts into a higher price point. We are looking for land that will work in both directions.”

He has a three-lot site where he could do three houses side by side for “economies of scale. I would rather move out to the edge, into neighborhoods that might have been overlooked, than compete with everyone who is bidding these land prices up to unreasonable levels.”