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## Design Basics marks 35th anniversary with redesigned website, database

by Savannah Behrends

Since opening in 1983, Design Basics has drafted close to 2,000 home plans and continues to evolve with technology and trends as it works to launch a new website.

"We have to give people a reason to build new, especially since we're competing against some great homes that are only four to five years old," said Paul Foresman, vice president and director of business development.

Foresman, who's been with the company for 29-years, said Design Basics utilizes consumer feedback and industry relationships to help pioneer trends. Whether it's through phone calls, in-person meetings or at the International Builders Trade Show, the goal is to listen to common problems.

In the past year, Design Basics introduced two solutions. The first was for the kitchen, where customers were feeling overwhelmed with small appliances on countertops. To solve this problem, lead designer Carl Cuozzo created the Small Appliance Center.

"It might be in a work-in pantry or outside the kitchen, but it has multiple plugs where these appliances can be used, but it's not in the kitchen," Foresman said.

The master bathroom presented



From left, President Kathy Dick and Vice President and Director of Business Development Paul Foresman ... Housing shortage and cultural shifts encourage consumers to build new.

a similar problem with a laundry basket that was commonly in the way. Cuozzo combined this problem with a request for a non-traditional seating area to create the Stor-N-More™.

"We have a padded flip top bench that the laundry basket can go into and then you can sit on top of," Foresman said. "It's a newer amenity, but it addresses how we live."

Master suites on the main floor have also begun to address how customers live. Kathy Dick, the company's fourth president, said this shift is because people are

looking to live in their houses longer.

"Then they can just change how they live depending on their age," she said.

Foresman noted only about 20 percent of home plans have the master suites upstairs now, whereas when he started it was 40 percent.

A shift toward multigenerational and multifamily housing has also begun to address the industry's housing shortage and debt. Whether it's two friends interested in owning a house together or children seeking to purchase a house with parents for various reasons, dual-owner plans are on the rise.

In fact, Design Basics' "hottest search" and No. 2 selling plan is dual-owner suites.

While new trends are surfacing, it has continued to incorporate popular approaches, such as its Woman-Centric Matters!® approach. The approach, which debuted

in 2003, continues to be popular, with leadership citing research naming women as the sole/primary decision-maker in homes.

"Women are so often thinking about everyone in the house, right down to the pets," Foresman said.

To continue offering plans in an efficient manner, the team decided it was time to update the website. Dick said one of the goals is to make navigation easier.

Before they could build the new website, they spent a year recreating its database interface. Previously, the website and order databases ran separately and "didn't talk to each other."

"We also just updated our blog, which is the first phase of our website," Dick said.

The blog is another push toward a social media initiative that Design Basics started focusing on in 2016 as a way to market the brand. Through venues like Facebook, Pinterest and Houzz, it's been able to change the "one-way conversation" that was previously present.

Although they have been making more direct connections with consumers, builders still make up roughly 60 percent of the business. Foresman said this isn't likely to change.

"We enjoy a much more even balance than we used to, but builders have a need for repeat purchasing," he said.

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