

"An unconventional path into custom home building"

JMJ CUSTOM HOMES

"Building Dreams on Solid Ground"

"Back then it was the bigger the bathroom the better," he said. "Everybody had to have this huge master bath and the bigger the tub the better. And the kitchen was very important. The bigger the better."

Then everything was open concept.

"And now it's more about outside living," he said. "They realize they don't live in a bathroom... The kitchen may be a little smaller but their outdoor living is very large and nice."

Outside living includes heated porches, outdoor spaces with TVs, areas for cooking, and even pools.



want you to have a problem with your house."

Bivins has been blessed with high quality subcontractors, some of whom he's had for more than 20 years, but when potential customers want to fill that role by telling them they want to lay their own floors or paint the house, he politely turns down the offer and the project.

"I tell them, I'm not the right guy for you," he said. "There's other builders out there that would love for you to do that, but I'm not him."

"It's my reputation, because they don't tell everybody that walks in the door that they painted the house," he said.

Part of ensuring that the home building process is thorough and done well is communication with the customers, which involves a lengthy meeting to decide on materials and what is and isn't included in the bid.

"That's something we're really big on," said Aull. "We take time in the beginning to be sure we bid it correctly, we're not going to have any hiccups and we're all on the same page."

The company also uses an app for each project that allows JMJ, all subcontractors, and even the customer to follow along on the progress and be informed

about what's being done and when.

"When you're building this home and it's your dream home or forever home, that's a super exciting time," she said. "We don't want it to be this stressful thing for these people... we want it to be fun."

Bivins likes to enjoy the process too, which means flexing his creativity on his specialty, tray ceilings, which are recessed shapes in normally flat ceilings, which can allow for varying colors, lighting, and even whimsy.

"Tray ceilings are probably my favorite thing," he said. "I've done hundreds of them, and I try to come up with something new every time."

He made tray ceilings for a home in the parade of homes more than 20 years ago and when he saw the public's reaction to them he knew he had to do more. Now they're



"That's the most important thing right now is outside living," he said.

Knowing the details of what someone wants in their custom home is important, but Bivins said it's more important for customers to know what they want in a home builder, since it's a long, collaborative process.

Customers need to ask themselves "what are we actually looking for in a builder," he said.

"My goal is for you never to have a problem with your house, because if you've got a problem with your house, guess who else has got a problem? I do, so I don't want you to have a problem with your house."

not only a selling point for his business but a draw to the parade.

"People show up at the parade and look for my trays," he said. Over the years Bivins has seen trends come and go and even slowly change over time.

"Not the home. I can build your home or Joe Blow can build your home, but what are you looking for in the person, in the company?" he said. "They need to talk about that before they ever come and meet a builder."

