

Early Development News Coverage

Post and Courier, February 26, 1998

Developments booming in Mt. Pleasant

February 26, 1998 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: DAVID QUICK | Page: 1 | Section: EC

(excerpted)

I'On

Perhaps the most talked-about new residential development in the history of Mount Pleasant is starting to take shape almost a year after Mount Pleasant Town Council approved it.

I'On, also known as The Jordan Tract, is a neotraditional, medium-density development sandwiched between several low-density subdivisions, Molasses Creek, Hobcaw Point and Heron Pointe.

Some residents continue to flood the editorial pages of a local weekly paper, The Moultrie News, with letters and comments opposing I'On and criticizing the developers and town officials. Some of the letters are written anonymously.

Development coordinator Geoff Graham said winter rains have slowed infrastructure work, but that construction is about to start on the first house.

Graham estimated that 30 to 40 of the first 100 homes will be completed by the end of the year. The first phase includes 155 houses.

Post and Courier, July 19, 1998

Selling a vision I'On emphasizes neighborhood feel

July 19, 1998 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: DAVE MUNDAY | Page: 1 | Section: H

Maybe you didn't realize the social damage we've inflicted on ourselves by building houses without big front porches.

The decline of the porch is just part of a problem that needs to be corrected, according to a new school of developers that includes those building I'On in Mount Pleasant.

"The loss of the porch and its significant role in the public realm has taken its toll on our sense of place and feeling of neighborhood," says Macky Hill, who developed the architectural guidelines for I'On.

I'On is the neighborhood taking shape behind the new roundabout on Mathis Ferry Road. The single-lane circle was built earlier this year to handle traffic in and out of the community, which could eventually include more than 750 houses, plus stores and shops. The roundabout was built to avoid a stoplight and has been the topic of some controversy in Mount Pleasant.

I'On is part of a growing trend of nostalgic communities known as traditional neighborhood developments. They're built to foster social interaction, and prominent front porches near wide sidewalks are part of the plan. Other elements include small lots, garages tucked in the rear, lakes and parks, and a town center to encourage shopping without driving.

Another key element is adherence to strict architectural guidelines that reflect the past. I'On prides itself on the strictest architectural regulations of any new community in the Lowcountry.

The basic guidelines are outlined in a nine-page booklet called The I'On Code. A more extensive explanation is offered in a supplement called "Principles of Lowcountry Vernacular Design," which Hill wrote and illustrated.

The supplement lays out the details of proportion, order and proper materials for walls, porches, balconies, windows, shutters, entries, doors, roofs, fences, gates and outbuildings. It's sold through I'On Realty for \$29.95.

About 20 houses are under construction in I'On, and the first residents are expected by the end of this month.

Houses for sale range in price from \$268,000 to \$339,000. The least expensive house plan that will be sold is about 1,500 square feet and costs \$200,000, including the lot, according to I'On Realty broker-in-charge Chris Fraser.

That's higher than starting prices at other nearby communities that also claim a neotraditional design. For instance, prices on Daniel Island start at \$158,900 for 1,427 square feet and a two-car garage, said sales agent Sally Castengera.

Prices at RiverTowne across from Dunes West start in the 160s for 1,540 square feet, said broker-in-charge Ken Good.

But square footage doesn't include the porch, and porches can be quite substantial at I'On, Fraser said. They must be at least 8 feet deep, and they're considered an integral part of the house.

"These are really rooms," Fraser said. "People who come here looking for the most square feet per dollar should look elsewhere. That's not what we're about."

Builders must use materials that age gracefully over time, and that also adds to the price, he said. Also, ceilings must be 11 feet high for single-story houses, 10 feet for 1 ½ stories and 9 feet for two-story houses. "We're focusing on quality," Fraser said.

For example, windows must have wooden sills with drip kerfs cut underneath. Those are grooves that keep water from running back under the sill to the walls.

Social life also is a key ingredient at I'On, and the social network was in full swing before the first house was started.

Julie Cofer of Civic Communications oversees the I'On Trust, which organizes social events for residents and visitors. Its budget comes from a tenth of a percent of sales, said developer Vince Graham.

About a dozen residents, plus visitors, have been meeting weekly at the sales center on Saturdays, Cofer said. This Saturday's event was a tour of historic Charleston led by Hill, and next week the group will go fishing.

The social network is a prime marketing tool for the community. Cofer sends out regular announcements of upcoming events to 1,500 people who have expressed interest in I'On, she said.

More elaborate monthly events are planned. A party at the new Eastlake boat landing drew a crowd earlier this month. The landing is open but not painted yet.

No one can buy a lot without an approved house plan, and the plan must be built by one of a dozen approved builders, who are called The I'On Guild.

After a lot is reserved, the buyer has 60 days to get a plan approved, although the time can be extended in 30-day intervals. Lot prices in Eastlake, the first neighborhood, range from \$42,850 to \$92,700. The most expensive are along the lake.

The houses will be set back from the lake far enough to allow a public walking path around the water.

I'On will consist of six neighborhoods, each with 80 to 150 houses. In the center is Ponsbury, which is bordered on the west by a lake called Westlake. On the other side of the lake is the Westlake neighborhood.

The neighborhood behind the roundabout is Ionsborough, where the town center is under construction. The sales trailer will move from Eastlake to the town center later this month, Fraser said.

The town center includes 30,000 square feet of space, about the size of the commercial district in Mount Pleasant's Old Village, Graham said. It also includes a lot reserved for a church.

To the north of Westlake and Eastlake are Montrose on the west and Shelmore on the east. The northernmost lots will be developed along the marshes of Hobcaw Creek, and docks are indicated on the master plan.

The national interest in neotraditional neighborhoods was sparked by Seaside in Florida, and it was further stimulated by Newpoint in Beaufort. Graham developed Newpoint before moving to Mount Pleasant for I'On.

A North Carolina company that tracks the growth of traditional neighborhood developments estimates that the money invested in them has grown 60 percent annually in the past five years, according to the May/June issue of Residential Architect magazine. The company is The TND Fund of Durham, N.C.

The South leads the country in the growth of these nostalgic communities, according to the magazine. Of the 64 traditional neighborhood developments in progress across the nation, 43 are in the South, according to Norcal Market Perspectives of Roseville, Calif.

The magazine spotlighted four of these new communities, including I'On in Mount Pleasant.

Post and Courier, July 19, 1998

Inside look I'On house on display

September 13, 1998 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: DAVE MUNDAY | Page: 1 | Section: I

So what makes I'On so special?

It's a question people naturally ask when a new community claims to be different from the rest, and I'On certainly fits the bill. It's designed to look like an old walking neighborhood, such as downtown Charleston or the Old Village of Mount Pleasant.

Those who wonder what all the fuss is about have a chance to find out, if they don't mind spending \$3. That's the cost of a ticket to tour one of the first finished houses.

The house is owned by Geoff Graham, general manager of The I'On Co. and younger brother of president Vince Graham. It's near the lake with the public boathouse and gazebo where the I'On Trust holds parties for potential residents.

It's also near about 30 other houses that are finished or under construction in I'On's first neighborhood. The first resident moved in last month.

The houses are close together, but the developers say that makes them more valuable. Tall houses next to wide sidewalks form the walls of outdoor living spaces and give a sense of community, according to the Grahams, and community is a large part of what I'On is all about.

It's a community where value can't be measured in square feet, the developers say, and the least expensive house costs more than \$200,000.

Graham built his house for about \$300,000, including the price of the lot, which is one of the smallest in I'On.

The lot measures 35 by 70 feet, but Graham was still able to include a narrow landscaped courtyard along the east side and a gravel driveway in the rear for a carport or garage.

The house contains 1,960 square feet of living space and another 800 square feet on four porches. An unusual feature is a basement, which is rare in Charleston. The site is 20 feet above sea level and 6 feet above the water table, and the basement ended up lowering the cost per square foot, Graham says.

The basement - which is only partially underground - contains a small suite of two rooms and a

bathroom. The front room leads to a cozy porch whose floor is covered with those old-looking bricks you see in downtown Charleston. They were salvaged from old houses in Savannah, Graham said.

Graham says he based the house's design on the old beach houses of Sullivan's Island. But it also picks up features of historic Charleston houses, such as a bell-curved roof covered with standing-seam copper.

The ceilings on the main two floors are 10 feet high, which makes the rooms seem bigger. Wide molding runs around the doors, windows, baseboards and ceilings.

The entrance is on the side near the outside courtyard and is one of the more dramatic interior features. The heavy front door is made of mahogany, with beveled glass windows, overhead transom and brass fixtures. The heavy door surround is dark-stained poplar.

Beyond the foyer, a stairway curves up to the second floor. The heavy newel post and railing were salvaged from an older house in downtown Charleston, Graham said.

To the left of the foyer is a parlor with two sets of built-in bookshelves and a wood-burning fireplace. The walls of the foyer are a peachlike color, and the woodwork is white.

The kitchen and dining area are at the rear of the first floor. The kitchen walls are a sea-green color, with white woodwork and light poplar cabinets. The sink and countertops are covered with a brown-colored granite. At the back of the sink is white wainscoting, which separates the kitchen from the dining area.

The third floor has two bedrooms and a bathroom. A roof deck is accessible through the attic dormer but is not part of the tour.

The house plan will be sold through Coastal Living magazine, which also is advertising the house tours. The magazine wanted to showcase a new community that would catch the interest of its readers as a potential place to move, and approached the Grahams last winter about working on a showhouse there, Graham said.

The furniture is on loan from Coastal Living advertisers and includes pieces from Drexel Heritage and Pier One Imports with an antiques West Indies look.

Most of the money from ticket sales will go to the S.C. Conservation League and the I'On Trust, with a percentage held back to fix up the house after the tours, Graham said. He plans to live there after the tours are over in December.

The house was built by Michael Daley and decorated by Linda Woodman of Charleston and Jane Kveitser of Hilton Head. The landscaping is by Graham's sister, Tamara Calabria of Asheville.

Post and Courier, December 10, 1998

New marker erected honoring Jacob Bond I'On

December 10, 1998 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: DAVID QUICK | Page: 1 | Section: EC

The man who may have helped mellow the heart of Yankee Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman toward Charleston was honored last week with a historical marker on Mathis Ferry Road in Mount Pleasant.

The I'On Co. paid to erect a sign giving a brief biography of Col. Jacob Bond I'On - the namesake of the development - who served as the president of the South Carolina Senate and the intendant (mayor) of Sullivan's Island.

I'On is buried a half mile north of the new marker in a preserved family cemetery. In 1854, he erected a family monument on the property to honor the Maybank, Read, Bond and I'On families.

In 1996, the I'On Co. restored the monument, which had been knocked over by vandals. The marker figures prominently in the company's marketing scheme, being the focal point of I'On's official logo.

I'On president Vince Graham was joined by Caroline Simons for a brief, informal ceremony last week. Simons is the great-great- great-great- grand niece of I'On.

She expressed delight that the I'On Co. was honoring her ancestor and speculated that I'On would "be pleased with the development here."

Simons said I'On hosted Sherman on Sullivan's Island while he was serving at Fort Moultrie. Many think Sherman spared Charleston from his burn-and-pillage campaign during the Civil War because of the time he spent in Charleston.

Simons said her late mother Caroline Lucas recalled staying in I'On's house on the island during a hurricane in 1911.

I'On Avenue on Sullivan's Island was named for I'On. Some say he had a fondness for racing horses near the current alignment of the avenue, which at the time may have been beachfront property.

The two sides of the historic marker read as follows:

"Jacob Bond I'On (1782-1859), planter, U.S. Army and militia officer, and state legislator, is buried in the family cemetery ½ mile north. I'On, a contemporary of John C. Calhoun at Yale University, represented St. James Santee Parish in the S.C. House (1810-1812), then resigned to be captain in the 2nd U.S. Artillery, serving with distinction during the War of 1812. I'On,

described at his death in 1859 as "a true Carolina gentleman," was elected to the S.C. Senate in 1816, serving until 1831 and representing first St. James Santee Parish, then Christ Church Parish; he was President of the Senate 1822-1828. He was also intendant, or mayor, of Sullivan's Island in 1823 and a delegate to the Nullification Convention of 1832-1833. Erected by The I'On Company, 1998."

Post and Courier, March 15, 1999

I'On subdivision takes shape

March 15, 1999 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: Robert Behre | Page: 1 | Section: B

MOUNT PLEASANT - Entering the I'On subdivision via the new round-about is your first clue that this a development bent on bending - if not breaking - the usual rules.

The round-about is an old traffic strategy that is being born again across the country. And this neighborhood is also borrowing an old architectural strategy - the spatial relationships found in downtown Charleston and Mount Pleasant's Old Village.

The new subdivision is taking shape off Mathis Ferry Road. About 60 homes are either complete or under construction.

The public realm - all the streets, sidewalks and plantings that surround the homes - is appearing, too.

Brick and concrete sidewalks have been built. A few public structures, including a lake house, are up. Palm trees line the large lake near some of the first homes.

One can even find special granite block curbs designed to appear more pedestrian-friendly. Developer Vince Graham says he got the idea from what was done near Charleston's Visitor Center.

These curbs include a gradual, raised curb needed for car and truck traffic. But they also include a tighter, street-level curb that makes the distance across the intersection seem smaller, more appealing and more friendly.

"The public realm is incredibly important. It's the most important thing," Graham says.

But it's not the only important thing, and the existing I'On homes are attractive, too. Their designs feature a strong verticality not normally found in the suburbs. And almost every one is blessed with at least one inviting looking porch. As in downtown Charleston, one is hard pressed to find a home without columns.

And each one seems distinct, not some knock-off or slight variation of the one down the street.

There's little obvious duplication, and that may be partly because the subtle bends in the roads and creative siting don't lend onlookers to easy side-by-side comparisons.

Graham recently enticed an old college buddy, Joe Barnes, to direct all aspects of building I'On. He moved in last week, leaving behind his job with Celebration, the successful urban development that Disney opened outside Orlando, Fla.

Barnes has done a lot of traveling and says, "I've run into a lot of people who didn't buy the house they liked the best. They bought the one they disliked the least."

He hopes that won't be the case in I'On. It's his job to work with owners and architects as they go through the I'On design review, a process similar to Charleston's Board of Architectural Review, only private. Macky Hill, who developed I'On's architectural guidelines, also works with would-be owners on their design ideas.

"Nobody intends to design an ugly house," says Barnes, but all the review and consulting helps ensure they don't.

Looking around the new neighborhood, it's hard to understand what all the fuss was about a few years ago when Mount Pleasant officials were debating how densely I'On could be developed (The words "I'On" and "controversy" appear in 15 letters, columns and stories in this newspaper.) Of course, the density argument, while settled for now, may not be settled in everyone's mind until all of I'On's 759 homes are built out.

Graham is not the only local developer using a neo-traditional approach - an approach that harkens to the more pedestrian-friendly, pre-World War II neighborhoods.

Down Mathis Ferry Road, the homes at Hamlet Square have prominent porches, and there's even a gazebo in the street. On Daniel Island, homes are nestled close to the street.

I'On is more pricey. While the least expensive home sold for about \$180,000, others have surpassed \$500,000.

Importantly, though, I'On and other developments are offering those wanting a new home more design options than ever.

"The best thing to do is build it and let people walk through it," Barnes says. "At least it gives people a choice. There's an alternative out there."

It will be interesting to see I'On grow, especially along the narrow canals linking its two lakes, where Graham plans a set of homes that will create a "Venice in the Lowcountry" look.

Barnes, who has architecture degrees from two institutions and a business degree from another, jokes about his preference for "vernacular rationalism."

I joke that maybe this approach explains the mobile homes near the I'On entrance. Graham

winces when he sees them and says they soon will be taken away.

The offices in the trailers soon will be moved into a commercial building at I'On's entrance.

"It's easy to get so consumed by the business side - the numbers and all that. But you've got to focus on the artistic side of it," Graham says. "It's like a cliché, but you're striving for the whole being bigger than the sum of its parts. There's magic coming from it."

Anyone interested in the history of 17th-century paint schemes may want to attend a lecture at 7 tonight. Timothy Breen of Northwestern University will give a talk, "Discovering Color: Reconstructing a Visual Landscape in the Age of Washington" in Room 309 of the College of Charleston's Simons Center for the Arts.

Post and Courier, October 4, 1999

I'On's neighborhood proves its value to area

October 4, 1999 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: Bob Lang | Page: 9 | Section: F

I'On developers took a lot of heat during the planning process, mostly from nearby Mount Pleasant homeowners who feared the massive project off Mathis Ferry Road would ruin the neighborhood.

Today, 18 months after the first houses started going up, the complaints have turned to compliments.

"After the planning and permitting process was finally approved, everything really settled down," I'On marketing and sales director Chris Anderson said. "I really haven't heard any negative comments. I think we've pleasantly surprised some people in that we're actually doing what we said we were going to do."

They are doing it quickly. More than 45 families have moved into I'On and another 70 homes are under construction. New roads and home sites are opening up all the time. A 6,000-square-foot sales office opened in July, and site clearing is under way for a second building, which is booked solid with commercial tenants.

A combination soccer field and children's playground has been completed. On Oct. 10, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra will perform a free public concert on the field beginning at 4 p.m.

Meanwhile, construction is set to begin this month on The I'On Club, a private swimming and tennis facility slated to open in the summer of 2000. The facility will feature six clay tennis courts, a junior Olympic swimming pool and a two-story clubhouse.

While it's common for new developments to build clubhouses and amenity centers first, Anderson said I'On purposely delayed that until a substantial number of houses were completed.

"We wanted to show what we were trying to accomplish," he said. "There may have been questions in the beginning about what the quality was going to be like. Once we had vertical product, it became easy to see what we're all about."

For those unfamiliar with I'On, it's a neotraditional neighborhood where parks and playgrounds are placed to encourage residents and visitors to mingle. The neighborhood is located on a 243-acre tract and offers 759 home sites.

The roads are narrow and the homes are close together. The architecture is similar to what you find in downtown Charleston. The Eastlake area of I'On looks much like the Colonial Lake area downtown.

There are 13 builders in I'On offering a mix of speculative and custom homes. Spec homes start at about \$235,000, while custom homes start at about \$250,000. Home prices top out at about \$1 million.

Some homes built in early 1998 have appreciated in value 40 percent to 50 percent, Anderson said, helping boost home values across the area.

For information on I'On, call the sales office at 884-3080 or go to www.ionvillage.com on the Internet.

Post and Courier, February 24, 2000

I'On home to be in LIFE and Bob Vila TV show

February 24, 2000 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)
Author: ELIZABETH W. COOK | Page: 1 | Section: EC

A home in I'On will receive national attention this fall when it's featured in Life magazine and on Bob Vila's television show.

The neighborhood off Mathis Ferry Road in Mount Pleasant was selected as the site for the magazine's annual Dream House. It will appear in the October issue.

Bob Vila was at the construction site two days last week to film the first two episodes of his show, "Home Again," which will chronicle the home's construction.

"I like antique architecture," Vila said. "It's reintroducing a lifestyle that was prevalent 100 years ago - building new houses with new technology that still celebrates 19th-century architecture detailing."

He said he'll make about a half-dozen trips to Charleston during the coming months to film the 13 half-hour episodes. While he's here, he plans to visit the gardens at Middleton Place in the spring, enjoy Lowcountry cuisine and appreciate the architecture.

"I think one of the most beautiful things in Charleston are the steeples," he said.

The episodes also will feature area attractions such as the Old Village in Mount Pleasant, said the show's producer, Sarah Monzon of Bob Vila Television.

"I've heard that it's absolutely beautiful and really the town concept they're trying to achieve here," she said. They did not go to the Old Village during this trip.

The I'On house is designed by architect Andres Duany of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. in Miami and will be about 3,000 square feet.

It will be in keeping with the traditional Lowcountry style of I'On, though it'll have more bells and whistles, such as a high-tech sink that actually cooks. The final design is kept top secret.

A buyer has already put the house under contract, said Chris Anderson of I'OnRealty, but it will be open to the public for tours from Aug. 18 through Sept. 18.

In its second year of development, I'On is home to about 70 families. About 100 homes are under construction and about 50 are under contract, Anderson said. The neighborhood is approved for 762 homes, he said.

Home prices start at \$250,000 and go up to more than \$1 million, he said.

He said the neighborhood has previously been featured in Coastal Living magazine and will be part of a Southern Living article in May.

Life magazine will be on the stands Sept. 18, and the first episode of the show will air in that month. But for now, Lowcountry residents won't be able to see it.

Though reruns of the "Home Again" are broadcast on cable, none of the local networks carry the syndicated show, a glitch BVTV representatives said they will try to change before the fall.

Post and Courier, September 4, 2000

Owner makes big deal of small home

September 4, 2000 | Post and Courier, The (Charleston, SC)

Author: Robert Behre | Page: 1 | Section: B

MOUNT PLEASANT - When developer Vince Graham calls to talk with me about his new house in I'On, I remember how he once said he planned to build a 700-square-foot house.

I ask him how big it turned out to be, and he tells me it's 980 square feet.

"It grew a little bit, and now it's a mansion," he says.

In fact, it may be the smallest single-family home built on site in the Charleston area in years.

And for Graham, the two-story, pine-shingled house on Eastlake Road is not just a home, it's potent proof of how American homebuilding practices have gone awry.

(It's also a source of ample one-liners for the affable developer, who, when I show up at his door, quickly tells me, "I'll give you the tour. It doesn't take long.")

Graham says historic neighborhoods in Charleston, Savannah and Nantucket often have much smaller houses built long before zoning laws. In recent decades, developers have sought to stabilize home values by building homes of a more similar size - or at least of a minimum size.

"My contention is if you had the ability, like they used to in the Old Village or downtown, you'd be able to serve a more affordable house market - the way to get affordable houses is to get smaller houses," Graham says.

"The standard two parents with kids at home is only 35 to 40 percent of the new home market, but that's basically what all the homes are built for in suburbia."

Still, Graham's house is an anomaly even in I'On, which accepts smaller houses but where Graham says the average size is more like 2,400 square feet.

With I'On's total number of lots capped at 752, there are no lots suitable only for small houses: Graham's house occupies less than half of the lot where it sits.

Graham says his neighbors' property values shouldn't be hurt because of his house's size because his house has architectural details of a similar quality. Also, its 44-foot-wide presence makes it one of the widest houses on his street.

"We tried to dispel the myth that quantity equals quality, and what holds the value together - what enables you to have a 1,000-square-foot house next to the 4,000-square-foot house - is the quality of the public realm, the architectural design, the proportions. Those sorts of things," he says.

The home appears not only livable for up to two people but even luxurious. The front door opens onto a large room that includes a dining table and a living area. The dining and living areas are divided by a mahogany curving staircase.

A small kitchen area is off to the right, and a laundry room, guest bedroom and bathroom are tucked off to one side. On the second floor is another bedroom, a bathroom and a study area.

What makes the house seem livable - and much larger - is a 170-square-foot screened porch off to one side. Graham jokes that while he has one of the smallest houses, he has one of the Lowcountry's largest porch swings - a 7 ½-foot-wide custom model.

Also, the fireplace on the back of the home serves both the inside and the outside at the house's rear, another quality space that doesn't add to the square footage total but makes the house more roomy.

Graham says the design was a collaboration between him, carpenter Dennis Devore, builder Tim Hager and I'On design guru Macky Hill.

"Our operating model was a boat or a boathouse," Hill says. "We tried to keep it Lowcountry: porches, high proportions and tall windows. It's kind of got Greek Revival proportions."

Hill says Graham's house is related to I'On's new Lifespan House, which architects Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. designed to show how a single home can be expanded in four stages to meet family needs - from a starter home to a home for empty nesters.

Graham's house is comparable to the first stage. The actual Life-span House on North Shelmore Boulevard shows all four stages and is open for viewing until Sept. 17 for a \$5 fee.

Even if people see wisdom in his message of smaller houses, Graham says he expects buyers likely will avoid building small unless their desire for a small home trumps traditional - possibly outdated - concerns about resale value.

"Maybe one day when the zoning laws die - I think they're dying now because they're obsolete - people will come back and do just what they've done in Charleston," he says.

TRADITIONAL HOME

By playing with the scale of the windows of his Greek Revival shingle home, developer Vince Graham is able to create the illusion of a much larger house than the actual 960 square feet in his cottage. Bottom: Vince grabs a book and a quiet moment on the porch of his house.



SMALL HOUSE, BIG IDEA

Developer Vince Graham squeezes a lot of living into a 960-square-foot gem in South Carolina.

By Eliot Nusbaum

VINCE GRAHAM IS A MAN of vision. Make that plural—visions with an "s." First, there was Newpoint, the enormously successful neotraditional neighborhood across from Beaufort, South Carolina. (See *Traditional Home*, November 1998). Now he's looking to conquer space in I'On, another South Carolina neotraditional development located just five miles from downtown Charleston and five miles from the Atlantic Ocean.

As was the case when he helped create Newpoint, Graham has built





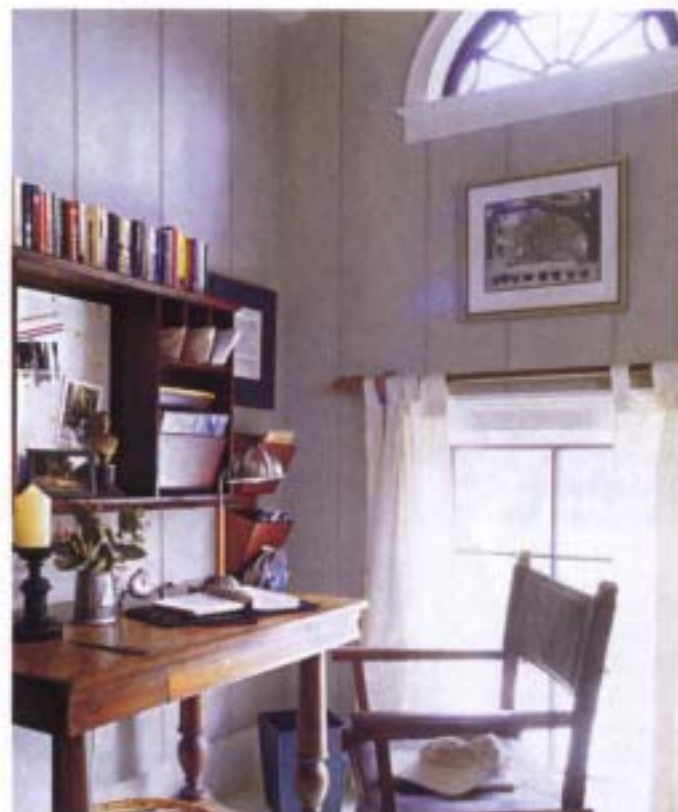
a home for himself in I'On, which was recently named "The Best Smart-Growth Community in the Nation" by the National Association of Home Builders. The village is named for Jacob Bond I'On, a planter, U.S. Army and militia officer, and state legislator whose family established Hobcaw Plantation, the site of the development, around 1730.

Unlike the house he built in Newpoint with architect Melanie Taylor, Graham's new home is adapted from a plan by a Tampa, Florida, architect in the *TND (Traditional Neighborhood Design) Planbook*. It's one of many vetted by a team of architects working with Homestyles Publishing to provide plans for developers, builders, and homeowners interested in reviving traditional neighborhood design.

Above and left: Though just 20x13 feet, the sitting area, defined by an Oriental rug, seems larger because of the limited amount of furniture. The dining half, also defined by an Oriental rug, offers expansive views. The open-tread spiral staircase divides the two areas without closing off either. French doors lead to the covered porch, where larger dinner groups can be accommodated.



Above: Vince describes the master bedroom as "a cozy, out-of-the-way retreat." As in all of the upstairs rooms, the windows are unusually low, revealing one of the architectural tricks for creating the illusion of a larger house. The ceilings are stained plywood.



Left: The library/office area is at the top of the spiral staircase. In addition to being a work space, it is also the bedroom foyer. **Above:** With its wood countertop and exposed chrome fixtures, the master bath has the feel of a boathouse.

Vince's inspiration was Thomas and Martha Jefferson's 420-square-foot honeymoon cottage, where the couple lived for three years while Monticello was under construction next door. Relatively speaking, Vince's Greek Revival-style home is a palatial 960 square feet. Says Vince, "I was striving for something that met my needs while showing how a high-quality small house could coexist with larger and more expensive homes next door. The key is the quality of the space."

Though the house is small, it lives large, with 10-foot ceilings; ample, light-flooding windows on three walls of each of the principal rooms; and easy, open access to porches and a courtyard.

In a way, the idea behind the house also describes I'On. "Our development philosophy involves making the world a more beautiful place through the creation of en-

during aesthetic, economic, and social values," says Vince. "Specifically, we are focusing on building a public realm, a neighborhood commercial square of small shops and restaurants, civic buildings such as churches and clubhouses, and significant parks and trails that will complement the private realm. We also encourage those elements of the private realm to be built in a manner that will complement the public realm. The result is





Left: This wall opposite the dining area forms the "entry hall." Vince treats the exterior space leading up to the front door as his foyer. Below: The kitchen, to the right of the front door as you come in, is small but efficient—all that's needed for a single chef to make dinner.



a situation in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts."

Of course, the interior spaces are just as important to the individual homeowners. In Vince's case, he brought in designer Roberta Ketchin, not only to decorate but to help maximize the functionality of the house.

"We wanted the interiors to be strong and handsome, to set a tone of quality and project a classic look," recalls Ketchin. "We went for an 'old' feeling with the rugs and the mahogany furniture, some of which came from Vince's home in Beaufort. We created a gracious impression by using Oriental rugs instead of furniture or



Even the yard of Graham's house is small but has room for a modest little garden and a pond. This side of the house opens onto an alley used for service and for walking.

accessories in order to define certain spaces."

The results are what Ketchin describes as "floating rooms," with little or no furniture set against the walls, an arrangement that produces spaces that are "airy and strong," as she puts it. "We feel our design actually enhanced the architecture."

Another enhancement is the use of a single wall color throughout the house.

"This can be so effective because a really great color complements the wood and the woodwork, validating the effectiveness of the architecture as you move from room to room," notes Ketchin.

Against the soft taupe of the walls, she painted all the woodwork white, providing a dramatic contrast to the dark-stained ceilings and space-saving spiral staircase.

Says Vince, "I've renovated or built five homes for my own personal residences, and this is the most comfortable and the most manageable one yet."

As for I'On, which will eventually have more than 750 homes, Vince is philosophical: "I don't think it possible to 'plan' a community. The best you can do is create conditions conducive to community formation."

But already I'On has taken on a character of its own, a character that has emerged from the community of people who live and work in the neighborhood. And that, of course, includes Vince. ■

Interior designer: Roberta Ketchin

Regional editor: Lynn McBride

For more information about I'On, call toll free 866-330-8200 or visit www.ionvillage.com