

Returning character to smaller homes

RETURNING CHARACTER TO SMALLER HOMES

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When [Rachel Odom](#) was house hunting for the first time, she couldn't find anything affordable and updated and unique.

So she built it.

Rachel Odom, a fourth-generation builder, had the "brainchild" Talavera, where modern homes are built to have the curb appeal of historic [Oklahoma City](#) homes. Her father, P.B. Odom III, is Talavera's developer.

They're not the biggest houses being built in town.

Houses in the neighborhood, near SW 164 and Santa Fe Avenue, start at about \$150,000 for 1,500 square feet, climbing to \$275,000 for 2,700 square feet.

"There is a demand for higher-end, smaller homes. The trend is people are going smaller, but loading them up with amenities," said [Aaron Tatum](#), one of the four builders in Talavera, which will take 10 years and have 600 homes.

Phase One of Talavera is complete, with the construction of 110 homes, including one of Rachel Odom's favorites.

Built by her company, Odom/Turnage Homes, the home includes a brick-enclosed porch highlighted with a circular opening.

"I wanted to catch people's eye. Some people love it: 'It reminds me where Gandmother lived,'" she said.

Work on Talavera started about 2 1/2 years ago. It took P.B. Odom a little longer to share his daughter's vision.

"Rachel had to convince me. She just kept saying, 'Dad, this is going to work.' She gave me pictures. I talked to some builders. At first, I thought we would just do two streets and then I decided to do whole thing," he said.

Rachel Odom said the idea of Talavera, named for a Spanish town known for its ceramics, started when she went home-shopping for herself. She was 25.

"When I was living in an apartment and I was looking to buy or build my first house, I just didn't find anything — there was nothing unique out there," she said.

So she asked her father, who has three other south Oklahoma City neighborhoods in development, "If you are doing a new neighborhood, can we do something different?"

After her father was on board, she had to convert the other builders.

Some builders have a tendency to build the same type of house over and over again.

"That's what I was worried about," Rachel Odom said.

And she understands why builders stick with a proven product — or a proven style.

"It's a big risk. You are putting a lot of money on the line, to see if something works," she said.

Tatum, who owns Aaron Tatum Custom Homes, remembers being told that building in Talavera meant including design elements of homes built in the 1920s to the 1940s.

"We wrestled with that. None of the local designers had done that before for the smaller homes. It was a real challenge for us," he said.

Then Tatum saw some pictures that Rachel Odom had taken of homes "with character that people really fall in love with" in Oklahoma City's Mesta Park, Heritage Hills and Edgemere Park neighborhoods.

"Finally, they gave us those examples, and we were able to run with that," he said.

Tatum said he has always admired the craftsmen who built historic homes, those who put the same amount of effort into small homes as they did nearby mansions.

"They were just incredible. These guys had the ability to turn these homes into something beautiful," he said.

Today, "the trend has been with smaller homes to make them more cost-efficient, which sometimes means they are less attractive," Tatum said.

Talavera reverses the trend, he said.

"It is putting the character back into smaller homes. We are going for a big-house look — a Rivendell look — but just reduced down," Tatum said.

Rivendell, at SW 131 and May Avenue, also is one of P.B. Odom's additions. Homes range from \$600,000 to \$2 million.

The Odom influence is a major reason for Talavera's success, said [Tom Farrar](#), community sales manager for Mashburn Faires Homes.

"[Paul Odom](#) is one of the best names in Oklahoma City, as far as developers go," Farrar said. "Paul has imagination. You can look at Rivendell and see that. That's the premier addition of southwest Oklahoma City."

Paul Odom listed Talavera's attributes: "Great design. Great builders. Great location. Great schools. Great amenities in the neighborhood — the brick entrance, the landscaping, the castle."

The castle is a gazebo-like, 26-foot-high structure that rises from a small traffic island. It's a "pretty architectural element" that turned out to be the best place in the

neighborhood for prom and wedding photos, P.B. Odom said.

Homes surrounding the castle can be accessed by alley streets, so the garages — like they are in historic homes — are placed in back. P.B. Odom said he is making a special effort with these homes, four of which are built.

"I pay for the design of every one of them, so they will be unique and beautiful and complement the neighborhood," P.B. Odom said.

Also complementing the neighborhood is the landscaping, Rachel Odom said.

Because new homeowners often say they will plant trees — and then don't — at every home in Talavera, builders must plant at a tree with a trunk measuring 3 inches around, she said.

In addition, builders must spend \$1,000 on trees and other landscaping — excluding sod — so the neighborhood develops the kind of greenery that enhances older neighborhoods.

"That just adds so much, and it will pay dividends in the future," she said.

Talavera is one mile west of Interstate 35 not far from [Southmoore High School](#), scheduled to open next fall.

The location was part of the attraction for Drew and [Ashwin Seshadri](#), both software engineers, who purchased a bungalow-style home with flared pillars on the porch. They moved in several weeks ago.

[Drew Seshadri](#) is a fan of the porch, as well as the kitchen, with its granite countertops.

In addition, she said, "We couldn't find 2½ baths in the price range anywhere else."

Plus, she said, the neighborhood isn't far from [Norman](#), where they moved from and where they still go to the gym and grocery store.

"This area is growing like anything, and this will have good resale value," she said.

Unlike the Seshadris, Rachel Odom has never lived in Talavera. She moved into her current house in Rivendell long before Talavera was ready for residents.

She did meet her husband, [Matthew Slusher](#), a [U.S. Air Force](#) captain, through the neighborhood.

"He was one of those people looking for something different. He found a house and a wife," said Rachel Odom, now 32.

She's also pleased with another kind of union brought about by Talavera.

"I'm very happy with the final product," she said. "I pushed the envelope in our designs, so I'm very pleased with the marriage of the old and new."

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