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Local builder honored by national magazine

January 7, 2005

BY **BILL CUNNIFF** Real Estate Reporter

Advertisement

Bigelow Homes has been named Builder of the Year by Professional Builder, a national industry trade publication. It's the first time a Chicago area builder has won the award.

"The Professional Builder staff travels all around the country looking for the best developments and brightest people, so they bring huge credibility to this award," said Jamie Bigelow, a company official.

Bigelow is developing HomeTown Aurora, which already includes more than 825 single-family homes.

"HomeTown is an example of efficiency meeting innovation," said Bill Lurz, senior editor of Professional Builder. "Bigelow builds houses fast and well."

In the 1980s, Perry Bigelow, the founder of the company, created the Bigelow Heating Guarantee, an agreement that today pays the difference if a homeowner's heating bill exceeds \$400 a year. "The energy guarantee is just amazing," Lurz said.

Bigelow recently completed sales at HomeTown Oswego and HomeTown Romeoville.

The national award comes after a local honor. In October, Bigelow Homes won the first Community Vision Award, sponsored by the Metropolitan Planning Council in Chicago, the Home Builders Association of Greater Chicago and the Urban Land Institute (based in Washington D.C.).

When sales at HomeTown Aurora began several years ago, single-family-home prices started at \$99,900. Today, prices range from about \$147,900 to \$255,000. "As the community matures, people can see the value and are willing to pay for it," Bigelow said.



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When complete, HomeTown Aurora will include 1,288 homes on 173 acres.

In 2003, Bigelow Homes closed 212 homes, with an average sales price of \$178,743.

Professional Builder particularly noted the company's innovation in land-plan design. Pedestrian-friendly streets, plenty of neighborhood parks, a town center and big front porches are hallmarks at HomeTown Aurora.

"After years of research, I decided the lives of pedestrians, especially children, are more important than the desire of anyone to drive fast," Perry Bigelow said.

Bigelow's land planning needed many variances from Cold War-era codes, which included Federal Housing Authority mandates for wide streets so residents could evacuate quickly "in case of a nuclear attack."

Professional Builder. The new issue should be at specialty magazine stands now.

Bigelow Homes, (847) 705-6400.

YOU GOTTA HAVE HARTZ. Hartz Construction Co. Inc. recently was presented with the Commander's Award from the United States Marine Corps Reserve for outstanding achievement in support of the Toys for Tots program.

In the last decade, Hartz employees have donated more than 2,500 toys to Toys for Tots.

Hartz Construction, (708) 233-3800.

COLD SHOULDER. Does your home sometimes seem a tad chilly on bitter cold nights in January? A new novel, *Ordinary Wolves*, concerns a family living in a sod igloo in remote Alaska.

Seth Kanter, the author, grew up on the Alaskan tundra, and his family lived in a sod igloo. "Maybe 12 by 12 feet. No door, just a tunnel out, with skins over it," he said.

"Caribou hides to sleep on. But a wood stove in the middle. Things froze on the floor. The roof leaked during thaws. Lots of mice," he said.

Ordinary Wolves (Milkweed Editions, \$22).

COLUMBUS HOME. The Medieval finca (estate) believed to be of Christopher Columbus' family in Mallorca, Spain, is for sale. Local historians believe the explorer was born and brought up in the house.

"Mallorca has never been able to market the legendary finca as a Columbus [tourist] attraction because it has always been in private ownership," said Terry Walker of Property in Spain, the Web site marketing agent.

He said that DNA specialists from the FBI and the University of Granada are comparing samples from the remains of the discoverer of the Americas and the man Spaniards claim to be his real father who lived in Mallorca.

"If the DNA tests prove positive for Mallorca, the property would be priceless. It probably couldn't be bought for a galleon stuffed with treasure from the Americas," Walker said.

The estate includes the original Columbus family home in a complex of a main

house, three separate casitas and a cave first occupied 5,000 years ago. There are 7 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a sauna, a courtyard and a swimming pool.

Columbus home in Mallorca, www.propertyinspain.net.

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