



BUILDERS BUCK TREND IN PARADE THAT GROWS

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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Cleveland has canceled its parade of homes, and Cincinnati has cut back its version to just five houses.

But the 2009 Parade of Homes in central Ohio is not only on schedule for its July opening but will include more homes than last year's event.

Sponsored by the Building Industry Association of Central Ohio, the annual showcase of upscale homes — to take place July 11-26 in Dublin — will feature 11 homes, up from seven in 2008.

Why is central Ohio's show able to remain successful even during a bad economy?

"That's a good question," said Jim Hilz, BIA executive director. "I think we're in the right location, the right community and have a parade developer who develops fantastic communities and has hosted parades in the past. Combine all those, and this is the result."

As always in real estate, Hilz said, the top reason for success is location, location, location.

"We were fortunate to have the site we have this year," he said. "It's in Dublin, and the Dublin market has done relatively well overall. That gives people a level of comfort. Job growth there remains pretty strong. And it's a nice site."

The BIA did push back the Parade of Homes to July from its original mid-June date, but that was because of delays over design standards and the civic review process, Hilz said.

Rather than being a sign of trouble, Hilz was enthusiastic about the timing change.

"Moving it back a month, I think, helps us. We've seen in the past that . . . kids are just getting out of school, festivals are everywhere in June. If you get into July, things slow down a little bit — and there we'll be.

"So this is something that may last into the future."

Ultimately, the success of the parade is determined not by attendance figures, Hilz said, but "by the number of houses you sell."

Given those criteria, even last year's small event was a success, with most of the houses sold before the parade even opened.

This year's homes might sell even faster, if the developers' enthusiasm is any indication. The parade will take place at Tartan Ridge, a development in Dublin that's a joint venture between Edwards Land Co. and Romanelli & Hughes Building Co.

"Edwards and Romanelli & Hughes — they do an outstanding job," Hilz said. "The houses are just going to be incredible; very, very unique for the parade and the housing market in central Ohio. So it's very exciting for our participants. It'll be a heck of a show."