



this month

At home with Tom Bentley. How is one of the area's leading luxury builders staying busy in this tight economy?
(page 72)

trends

Direct from Morocco, a soft and stylish place to sit.
(page 74)

homefront

Clover Market returns, cupcakes invade Terrain at Styer's, and more.
(page 74)

hot property

Prime real estate in Devon.
(page 74)



BUILT TO IMPRESS: (Clockwise from opposite page) A similar room in Villanova's fabled Ardrossan estate served as the inspiration for the billiards area in the Bentley home; a spacious foyer makes the desired first impression; contemporary and classic touches converge in the master bathroom; the kitchen is dominated by a massive island.



luxury is not dead

The home of high-end Main Line homebuilder Tom Bentley is living proof. *By Tara Behan*

It's a sunny summer morning in mid-July, and Tom Bentley has invited realtors from Prudential Fox Roach Devon to tour his home and discuss the topic of "Building Out of the Recession." Bentley isn't naïve enough to believe that everyone who

showed came to hear him speak. Certainly there were a few who simply wanted to see where the Main Line's best-known high-end homebuilder kicks up his heels.

And who could blame them? Bentley Homes has been at it for 30 years, building

some of the most prestigious communities in the region. Made of stone and topped with a slate roof, Bentley's English Country manor home was custom built 11 years ago in his Harrison Estate development in Newtown Square. *continued on page 76*

ANDREW KAHL/WONDERFUL MACHINE

habitat *continued from page 72*

It sits high on a hill with gorgeous views.

"Years ago, I would've never hosted an event like this in my private home," says Bentley, who's designed plenty of models to serve just this purpose. "I don't think anyone wants to rebuild my house, but it has everything anybody could want."

Bentley is hoping his guests will be inspired by what they see—enough, even, to get excited about the housing market again. "Luxury is definitely not dead on the Main Line," says Bentley. "We're still selling million-dollar-and-up homes."

Bentley had a distinct vision for his dream house. "I wanted to build a home that, when you looked at it, you couldn't tell it was brand new," he says. "I've had appraisers come in and think this was an older home that I renovated. That, to me, is the biggest compliment."

Bentley's previous residence had been built at the turn of the century, and it informed much of what went into his new home. "All the moldings in here are custom," he says. "I had them all re-fabricated from the millwork in my other house."

When the lifelong Main Liner was a student at the Haverford School, he'd often ask his mother to stop when they drove by a construction site. "I always had a fascination with buildings and construction," Bentley recalls. "My mother was great—she always stopped for me."

His first project was a controversial one. "When I was 11 years old, I built a treehouse that was so huge my neighbor called the township building inspector to complain about it," says Bentley, who grew up in Villanova.

So Bentley had to fill out his first building permit. It would be the first of many. "The first house I built and sold was in 1974 on Goshen Road," he says. "It went for \$69,000."

When Bentley started in the mid-1970s, there wasn't a defined luxury market in the area. "But if a house was in this area, it was a pretty nice house," he says.

Within a few years, Bentley was building custom homes, expanding into full luxury developments in the 1980s. The late '80s brought a recession, and the housing market slowed. When the economy bounced back in the early 1990s, Bentley was poised to capitalize, with a number of properties in prime locations. His business took off, and Bentley remained a consistent regional presence through 2008. "When we started building developments, we were doing 3,000-square-foot model homes," he says.

At the height of the boom, the standard square footage more than doubled to 7,000. "It was an unbelievable time," says Bentley.

But times have changed. Yet, even in this fragile post-recession real estate market, Bentley insists that luxury is alive and well—even if clients are downsizing their expectations. "It's come down from super-sized to above-average size," he says. "It's always been an interesting dichotomy: Do people buy bigger and better because the builders are modeling it, or are the builders modeling the market? I think it's both. As builders and designers, we give inspiration to people."

Bentley's new Worthing development in Newtown Square features homes at a still-spacious 4,000 square feet. "We're constantly trying to balance people's expectations with the realities of the market," says Bentley. "People still want quality construction; they still want beautiful moldings and granite

At Rest It's A Lexus. But Most Of The Time, It's Simply A Blur.



The All-New 2011 Lexus IS line.

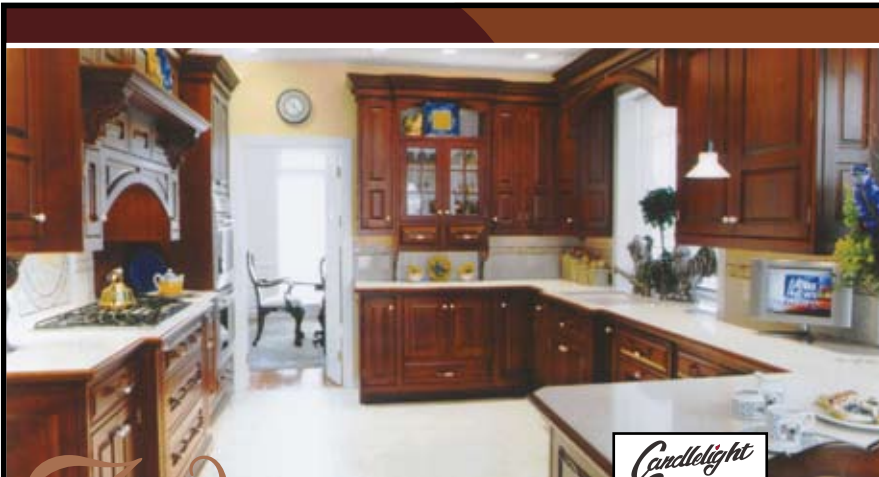
A V6 engine on steroids. A six-speed sequential transmission with paddle shifters. Available sport-tuned suspension. No wonder the IS is always in a rapid state of motion. Offering features like 14-speaker surround sound, navigation with Bluetooth® and all the luxury Lexus is known for, the IS may be hard to see at times. But it's always fun to drive. Stop by Wilkie Lexus for a test drive today.

The Largest Lexus Inventory In The Tri-State Area.

WILKIE  **LEXUS**

568 West Lancaster Avenue • Haverford, PA • 610-525-0900

www.WilkieLexus.com



*Candlelight
Cabinetry*

When Quality Counts... Count on Madsen

MADSEN
KITCHENS & BATHROOMS

Celebrating 65 Years

2901 Springfield Road, Broomall • 610-356-4800

www.madsenkitchensandbathrooms.com

Showroom Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 to 5 pm • Wed. night 7 to 9 pm • Sat. 9 to 3 pm

- Custom Kitchens, Bathrooms & Furniture
- Exquisite Designs
- Exceptional Service & Installations

countertops. They're just not opting for the top-of-the-line granite anymore."

In his own home, Tom Bentley went all out. The kitchen's massive wood-topped island is "the biggest I've ever seen in a home," he laughs. "I've had parties where 20 people are seated around it comfortably."

Growing up, Bentley had a breakfast room surrounded by walls of windows, which he copied in his house. "The room is large enough to accommodate a table with seating for six," he says. "This is where we eat the majority of our meals. It's a great, sunny spot."

Bentley's childhood home wasn't his only inspiration. His billiards room is modeled after one in the storied Ardrossan estate in Villanova, with its two-story wall

Bentley dedicated the entire third floor to a playroom for his two younger children, hiring a local artist to paint murals of scenes from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* throughout the space.

of windows framed with formal, pooled tapestry curtains, soaring cathedral ceiling, and pool table and bar (which opens to the patio). A TV projector drops down from the ceiling, and four oversized leather club chairs are arranged in a circle for frequent meetings with associates. "This is the type of room that's comfortable whether there's 10 or 200 people here," says Bentley.

A large aquarium separates the billiards room from a home office. "It reminds me of a Philadelphia lawyer's tobacco-stained library," he says of the space.

The cherry paneling and woodwork are carried over from the great room, and the large antique partner's desk has stayed with Bentley since his early 30s, as has the large leather chair. "I build homes for

Philadelphia's largest, most trusted Oriental rug cleaner.



*Thanks Zakian!
My rugs have never been so clean.
And the new fringe looks great too.*

**20% Off
Fine Rug Cleaning**

Now thru 10/31/11, we'll take 20% off every rug cleaned. **Minimum 2 rugs, any size.**
(present this ad at time of pickup)

610-525-2222

**Call Today for Your Free Estimate
Free Pickup and Delivery**

ZAKIAN
Since 1923

4930 W. Parkside Ave • Phila, PA
zakianrugs.com

*Discount applies to orders over \$75. Cannot be combined with any other offers. MLToday



Fine Rug Cleaning • Stain Removal • Repairs • Scotchgarding • Deodorizing



The exterior of the Bentley home; (right) a Disney-inspired mural and treehouse adorn the playroom.



many CEOs and entrepreneurs, so a home office is a crucial room," he says.

Bentley dedicated the entire third floor to a playroom for his two younger children, hiring local artist Pete Smith to paint murals of scenes from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* throughout the space. "He was here for months," says Bentley.

A faux tree and treehouse are obvious nods to what started it all for Bentley, and a small stage has been the site of many a performance by his kids.

Responding to a fickle market, Bentley is working on a number of communities at a variety of price points. Belrose in Kennett Square offers townhomes from the high \$200,000s, and the inventory

at Valley Park in Phoenixville begins in the \$700,000s. Meanwhile, the homes at Kinterra in Chadds Ford and Worthing—located just across the street from Bentley's house—begin at \$1 million.

"I've built through four recessions," he says. "Things always come back bigger and better."

To learn more, visit bentleyhomes.com. **MLT**

Specializing in motorized custom window treatments, interior design, furniture and home accessories.

Showroom Open
Monday - Saturday
10AM to 5PM

Home consultations by appointment

WINDOW CONCEPTS
turning personal spaces into remarkable places

4653 West Chester Pike ♦ Newtown Square ♦ 610-325-2094 ♦ www.windowconceptspa.com