



## ANTHONY CUSTOM HOMES

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### Understanding Perspective and Motivation

Anthony DePretis was just eight years old when he started his first building project—a three-story clubhouse in his parent’s backyard on Staten Island. He and his two brothers would scale walls and construct a roof out of 25 pallets. Over time, they expanded the build by adding different levels. The boys were particularly proud of their second-story “lookout tower.”

## BUILDER PROFILE

"I have always had interest in building things," DePretis said. That interest in construction continued through the years. In high school, DePretis worked with a remodeling company and then in college, he was hired as a union framer for high-end custom homes in New York City.

Upon receiving a degree in engineering, DePretis began a new construction career with one of the top five public homebuilders in the industry. He took on management roles ranging from everything in construction and project management to sales, marketing, and branding-- capping off his career in Senior Operations Management in Pittsburgh, New York and the Carolinas.

With nearly three decades of experience in residential homebuilding under NVR, Inc. (the parent company to Ryan Homes, NVR Homes and Heartland Homes), DePretis was more than prepared for his new venture: Anthony Custom Homes, a business he started just under three years ago.

"It's amazing to look back and realize that I was involved in the marketing and construction of over 25,000 new homes with a market value of over \$7

billion," he said. "I loved my career with one of the nation's most recognized builders and am so thankful for the opportunity I had to serve and learn from tens of thousands of families."

### FROM THE GROUND UP

After nearly 15 years of hearing encouragement from family, coworkers and vendors to start his own homebuilding company, DePretis decided it was finally time to break ground. Currently, he maintains a number of homes under construction in the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh, including Cranberry, Adams and McCandless Townships, as well as several upcoming projects in the city neighborhoods of Lawrenceville, Manchester, Mt. Washington and Deutschtown.

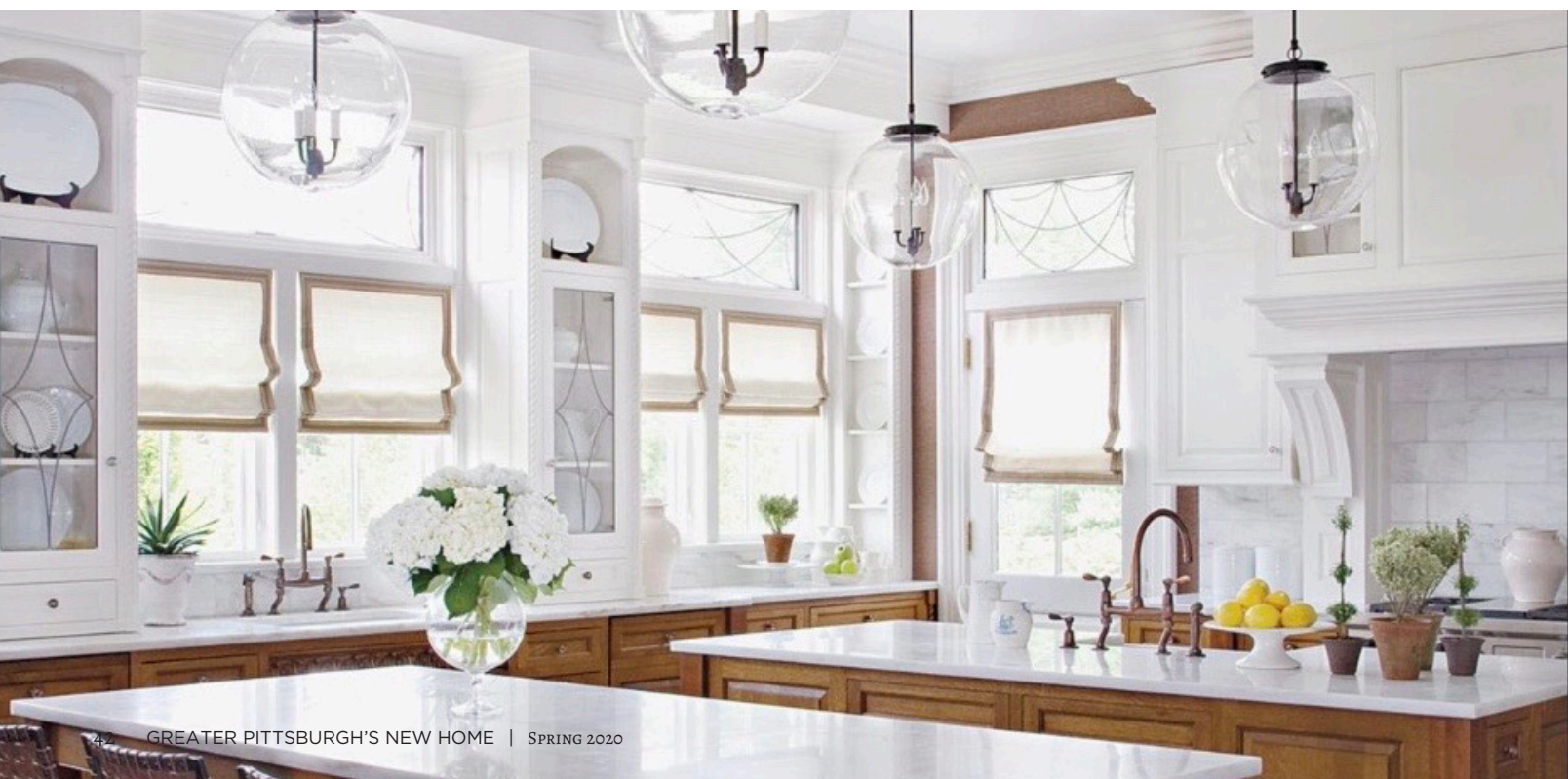
His suburban projects range from \$700K to \$1.8M, while his city projects range from \$325K to \$800K. These price ranges are dependent on the level of detail and finishes each client desires.

"The design can vary widely based on each customer's needs," he said. "We strive to offer special and unique elements in each project to differentiate someone's home while

simultaneously ensuring that the design will stand the test of time. We work closely with clients to not only make certain that their home feels fresh and up-to-date, but also to provide a very efficient and livable environment."

Many of DePretis' clients are drawn to the Craftsman, Modern Farmhouse and Industrial Craftsman styles. "We can work with whatever style the customer is envisioning," he said. His homes often feature open and functional spaces that allow for lots of natural light and tasteful design elements.

The most important part of the design project, though, is his interaction with his customers. "I meet with all of my clients personally. The design process is a collaborative process between the client, the architect and me," DePretis said. "My first meeting with a new client is simply an opportunity to learn about their lifestyle, wants and needs. My goal is to clearly understand the customer's vision. I also want them to be sure that they are comfortable and confident in what I can do for them. The builder/client relationship is paramount to an exceptional experience."





With his background in the industry and exposure to national trends, DePretis can guide his customers in narrowing down their vision. He then is able to transform that vision into reality. "People are busy. The number of choices available to clients these days, especially with the never-ending number of online sources and design-oriented TV shows, can be totally overwhelming," he said. "Rather than sending the customer out to look at endless products or limiting them to the products in a fixed design center, I curate specific products for the client based on our discussions. My team and I help narrow down the number of choices as we work hand-in-hand to arrive at a final set of selections which fit their style and budget."

Mike and Lynn Olzak, both 65, built a home with Anthony Custom Homes in Manchester, a City of Pittsburgh neighborhood in the North Side, last year.

"The location simply could not be better," Lynn Olzak said. Being so close to the city, their new home fits perfectly with their lifestyle. The couple is Pittsburgh Steelers season ticket holders (which as locals know, requires a fairly considerable time commitment lasting between August and January), and they are able to walk to all the home games at Heinz Field. For a house in the city, theirs stands out because of its two-car garage. "That's unheard of in the city," Mike states.

The Olzaks moved to Manchester after renting in the neighborhood for a while. Before that, Mike and Lynn lived in Butler County. "We've lived in plenty of houses in our lives, but we never built one," Lynn said. "It was an entirely new experience. Anthony was available at any time. Every week we'd stop by and he'd show us the progress. He held our hand the whole time. I was very impressed."

When it came to customizations for Mike and Lynn's home--like a large

country sink and an updated stove and fireplace-- they were pleased to have his expertise.

"I spend a lot of time in the kitchen, so I really wanted the large sink," she said. "We're also quite satisfied with the living room space. It's a total open plan from the living room, dining room and the kitchen. We couldn't be happier."

Scott and Connie Tompkins, both 58, decided to build with DePretis in 2019. After a job transfer, they moved from Houston, Texas and upgraded into a bigger house on Grindstone Place in

***"Anthony is a fantastic builder with great attention to detail. The details of the extra woodwork in the home make you love it at first sight."***

Cranberry Township. The couple chose a Craftsman style with 4 bedrooms, 5 baths and a full-finished basement. When asked why they decided to hire Anthony as their builder, they both gushed, "Anthony is a fantastic builder with great attention to detail. The details of the extra woodwork in the home make you love it at first sight."

Scott appreciated the fact that "Anthony was very easy to work with and accommodated us whenever we had changes." He and Connie cite the kitchen as their favorite part of the house, saying, "It's amazing. Anthony put a lot of thought and attention to detail in the kitchen for sure."

For DePretis, transforming a house into a home is the ultimate reward. "There is a collaborative, creative nature inherent in this industry.

Whether it's conceiving a new project for a model home, trying out a new product or design detail or working one-on-one with a client, I am always excited to see and hear about the result," DePretis said. "I often find that I am just as excited about the project as my clients are."

### **WORKING TOGETHER**

DePretis knows that it takes a village to build a home, so he believes in taking the time to understand his customer's wants and needs, as well as the people who are contributing to his build.

"I have learned that you need to understand each person's perspective and motivation in order to have a successful builder/client relationship. Every client has their own perspective on what they expect from their new home and their builder," he said. "I also consider my vendors and suppliers as partners and customers. I encourage and solicit feedback on best practices and trends, and I rely on their feedback to constantly improve the houses we build."

In his 32 years living and working in the Pittsburgh area, DePretis has formed longtime relationships with most of his vendors and craftsmen. "My big builder background has allowed me to create long-term relationships with some of the country's most well-known suppliers," he said. "These decades-long partnerships help me to ensure that we offer the latest products and are aware of the latest trends while simultaneously being cost effective."

Natalie Rossa, a fiber cement siding manufacturer representative from James Hardie Building Products, appreciates working with a builder like DePretis. "It is very rare to find someone with an in-depth knowledge of the home building industry. Anthony's understanding

# BUILDER PROFILE





## BUILDER PROFILE

of the process to build a home is amazing and truly unique," Rossa said. "Anthony uses superior products on his homes and truly cares about transforming a house into a home. You can see that he is building a place where families will make memories all their lives. Anthony adds so many extra touches. It gives you a real sense of all the details and care put into each home."

By using products from James Hardie, DePretis can ensure that each build is durable and looks great. "Top to bottom, our exterior product line is defined by excellent performance, aesthetics and design options." Rossa said. "James Hardie is also climactically engineered. It has two different climate zones - Hz5 and Hz10. In each zone these products are designed to perform in different climates. For example, the Hz5 has properties that protect against the freeze/thaw cycle."

On the subject of windows and doors, DePretis wants to make sure that his customers receive the best quality product that will withstand weather and time.

Mark Bender, Trade Sale Representative for Pella Windows, has worked with Anthony Custom Homes ever since Anthony started the business. Pella offers diverse materials (vinyl, fiberglass, wood), and Mark says that what Anthony mainly uses is a higher end line of Aluminum-Clad Wood, which allows for customization. Says Bender, "Right now, black exterior and black interiors are popular, and Pella's wood pine interior allows people to see this beautiful grain on their windows from the inside. These are the kinds of details that do not go unnoticed." Mark believes that Anthony's skill in connecting the appropriate product line to the customer is what differentiates him from other builders.

Pella Windows Trade Sales Manager Brian Reuss reports "Anthony's

overall experience and his extensive knowledge of the industry is what attracts us to work with him." Reuss adds, "I've known Anthony for 14 years now, and each time I deal with him, I learn something about the building industry. His knowledge is projected into the homes he is building."

Brian also labeled Anthony as "super detail oriented," which matches up perfectly with the description of the homeowners and the other business partners who know and work with him.

No matter whom DePretis works with, he values their role in the homebuilding process. "Soliciting and being open to feedback from clients, vendors, friends and family is critical to providing a successful

experience," he said. "It is important that everyone involved is enjoying what we are doing."

And after all these years, Anthony DePretis still loves building as much as that kid who hammered away at his backyard clubhouse with his brothers.

"I feel very blessed to have spent my career doing something that I love and am passionate about. Everything about the industry still fascinates me," DePretis said. "It is not just about the bricks and mortar. We are building someone's dream: the place where they want to come home to every day. The place where they feel safe and happy. The place where they may raise their family or make lifelong friends." **NH**



Anthony DePretis at a new home site in Cranberry Township.