

# DREAM HOME BUILDER

BY DANIELLE BIRKIN

+ PHOTOGRAPH BY BARRY JOHNSON

## With more than two decades of experience in the

Southern Nevada homebuilding industry, Ernie Domanico has acquired an intrinsic understanding of the local luxury residential market, knowledge that has served him well as president of Domanico Custom Homes, originally founded as Domanico Construction in 1979.

Although the company previously took on commercial and industrial projects, Domanico says his firm made the natural progression into high-end residential, and has emerged as one of the valley's premier homebuilders, with a plethora of projects in the area's most exclusive neighborhoods, including Spanish Trails, Southern Highlands, Red Rock Country Club and MacDonald Highlands.

"For the last five years, we've specialized strictly in custom homes," says Domanico. "Everyone will admit that it's one of the toughest parts of the industry, but that's where I started on a smaller scale and just kept moving into bigger and bigger homes, and it's what we know. We'd love to build smaller homes, but multi-megabuck corporations run that part of the business. They leave us the custom home component—if they don't want to do it, somebody has to."

Since its inception, the company—which now has 12 employees, not including sub-contractors—has built 85 luxury residences, most of which are larger than 4,000 square feet. Prices average from \$2.5 to \$4.5 million, although its largest project is a 13,700-square-foot spec home in Southern Highlands that carries a price tag of \$11.7 million.



The core of the Domanico Custom Homes team: Adam Knecht, general manager and Ernie Domanico, who founded the company in 1979.

DOMANICO  
CUSTOM HOMES

**CURRENT PROJECT:**  
DECKER CUSTOM HOME

**PRICE:** \$4.5 MILLION

**LOCATION:** THE RIDGES

**CONTACT:** 702/221-0338

[domicocustomhomes.com](http://domicocustomhomes.com)

“The local upper-end market is strong, even though there is a flat spot in the \$300,000 to \$1 million range,” says Domanico. “We get so many celebrities and professional athletes and people with money moving to Las Vegas or wanting a second home in Las Vegas, and with communities like The Ridges, Southern Highlands and MacDonald Highlands, it goes to show how exciting it is to be here.”

Although the firm historically constructed two or three custom homes per year, it has recently ramped up its building efforts and now averages eight or so, a move Domanico attributes largely to his partner and son-in-law Adam Knetch, who joined the firm in 2005 and has a solid background in business, computer technology and construction.

“His knowledge is what inspired us to take it to the next level, and we have definitely grown because of young blood,” says Domanico, who also owns Leading Investments, which specializes in land acquisitions and development. “We are not run like a mom-and-pop operation. I now have more sophisticated business and accounting systems as well as a marketing department that has fueled growth.”

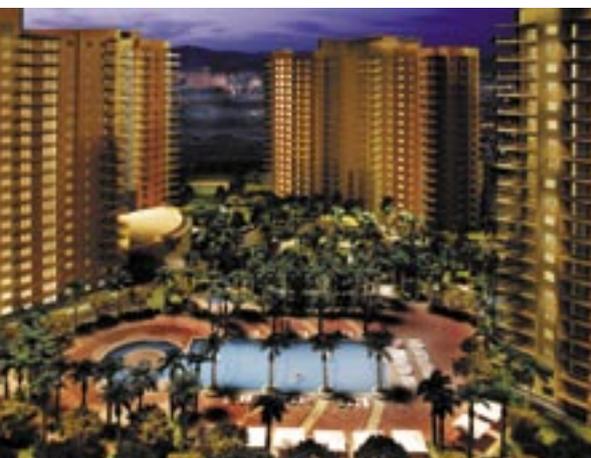
As for the future of the company, Domanico says he hopes to refine the business and remain focused on superior projects.

“We don’t want to be the biggest builder in town, and are happy with our size,” he says. “We like to be hands-on and have control, and building custom homes is something that takes a lot of attention to detail. We would rather work with quality sub-divisions and keep focused on customer service.” **HD**

## URBAN INSPIRATION

Presidio Heights, Las Vegas’ first Brownstone community, is near completion, with six models set to open this fall. Surrounded by the master-planned community of Southern Highlands, Presidio Heights will include 120 elegant units ranging from 1,500 to 1,900 square feet, with prices starting at \$450,000 and topping out at \$650,000. The residences will be three levels, and each will include a direct-access garage and feature modern amenities.

“Everybody has been talking about doing Brownstones in Las Vegas, but nobody has gotten it off the ground, so I think we’re the first to bring the concept here,” says Richard Orosol, managing member and principal of local development firm OLM. “Now homebuyers can experience a New York or Chicago style in Las Vegas.” **-DB**



## A HIGH-RISE WITHOUT THE HIGH COST

**ONE Las Vegas Lifestyle Condominiums**—a 19.5-acre master-planned village that will include five 18- to 21-story guard-gated towers—is poised to fill an overlooked residential niche in Southern Nevada, says Chet Nichols, owner/broker for Amland Properties LLC, the developer of the property.

“All the condo projects in town were either low-end or catered to the rich and famous in locations where no one would want to live on a day-to-day basis,” Nichols says. “ONE Las Vegas has all the features and benefits of any luxury high-rise in a neighborhood setting that is more convenient and has a price point that is 40 percent below the average high-rise due to our ingenuity and land costs.”

Located at Las Vegas Boulevard South near Windmill, ONE Las Vegas recently topped off the second tower. Prices range from the \$300,000s to more than \$1.7 million, with 14 floor plans ranging from 830 to 2,850 square feet. **-DB**