TOWN&style PROPERTIES

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MICHAEL LAUREN DEVELOPMENT

by **lauren denigan**

MIKE RECHAN, PRESIDENT OF MICHAEL LAUREN DEVELOPMENT, has a very good reason for giving clients his best. They are also his neighbors in the charming subdivision of Clayton Gardens, where Rechan has lived since 2004 with his wife, Lauren Rechan, publisher of *Town & Style*, and their two children. The area is bordered by Maryland Avenue to the south, Gay Avenue to the west, Lafon Place to the north and Brentwood Boulevard to the east. "It's a wonderful place to live," Mike Rechan says. "My kids are in the public schools here, which are great, and being able to walk to Clayton for coffee or dinner is a wonderful resource." Rechan's development office is also in Clayton Gardens, on Maryland Avenue. "I see my clients around the neighborhood all the time, and we are friendly with all of them."

With such strong personal ties to the neighborhood, Rechan is invested in maintaining the look and feel of Clayton Garden streets. It's a complicated neighborhood to build in, with restrictions and codes that vary from block to block, he says. He's working on his fifth development here, many on lots where the previous home was torn down to make way for new construction. "You have to learn all the ordinances specific to your project, and that's where your experience in a particular municipality helps—you're not starting fresh with each new project, but your knowledge builds over time. You know what you can and can't do right from the start," says Rechan, who is also a real estate broker and an attorney. His experience allows him to guide clients toward their dream homes, while still complying with area regulations. "What's good for the neighborhood is good for everyone," Rechan says. He maintains the correct style by looking at the architecture already in place on the block. He also uses techniques outlined by celebrity architect Sarah Susanka's *The Not So Big House* concept to maximize the usable space and efficiency of any size home. The result is a home that feels more spacious than its size.

In one recent project on Westmoreland Avenue, Rechan used this concept to create an open breezeway through the center of the home. "By separating the hallway with pillars instead of walls, you create a defined space that is actually still part of the rooms it bypasses," Rechan says. "The result is a spaciousness that this level of square footage normally wouldn't allow."

For an older neighborhood like this one, Rechan also creates homes that don't stand out as the new kids on the block. Using tumbled or aged brick, vintage fixtures and classic styles for lighting and other details helps new construction "get some soul," Rechan says. "I've had people come into some of our projects without even realizing it's a new home. They think it's a renovation, not a rebuild, which is a great compliment"

PHOTOS BY **SAM FENTRESS**

MICHAEL LAUREN

BUILDING HOMES IN CLAYTON GARDENS

[SOLD]

[63131]
$438,125
813 Minarca Drive
Price Per Square Foot: $162.99
Agent: Tina Niemann
Prudential Alliance

[63005]
$675,000
1319 Countryside Manor Place
Price Per Square Foot: $180.67
Agent: Maria Elias
Coldwell Banker Gundaker-Ladue

[63105]
$431,500
7646 Carswold Drive
Agent: Liza Streett
Laura McCarthy- Clayton

$1,020,000
155 Carondelet Plaza #706
Price Per Square Foot: $341.14
Agent: Debra Mehlman
Mehlman Homes Realty, LLC

[63119]
$550,000
854 Newport Ave.
Price Per Square Foot: $176.34
Agent: Jennifer Naert
Naert Realty

$570,000
125 E. Cedar Ave.
Price Per Square Foot: $202.99
Agent: Linda Hodge
Laura McCarthy- Town & Country

[63122]
$369,000
215 Austin Place
Price Per Square Foot: $186.65
Agent: Dorcas Dunlop
Prudential Advantage

$522,500
1392 Beverly Ave.
Agent: Anne Dunajcik
Keller Williams Realty St. Louis

[63124]
$615,000
8 Litzsinger Lane
Price Per Square Foot: $220.51
Agent: Sally A Stephen
Dielmann Sotheby's Intl. Realty

[63130]
$625,000
7042 Delmar Blvd.
Price Per Square Foot: $151.59
Agent: Sarah B. Partlow
Laura McCarthy- Town & Country