

# FINANCE & COMMERCE



When sculptor and former art teacher Peter Crain of Minneapolis-based Trestle Homes created this home at 3920 Thomas Ave. S., he took the familiar urban farmhouse concept and kicked it up several notches. Using carefully placed windows and French doors, he framed the meticulously designed rooms in this Minneapolis home with such care they become a series of still-life art pieces on view to the Linden Hills neighborhood. (Submitted photo: Trestle Homes)

## **Top Transactions: Builder gives homes artistic touch**

By: Anne Bretts January 12, 2019

Editor's note: The Top Transactions feature focuses on the latest top home sales in the Twin Cities area, as well as noteworthy new listings, new residential developments and housing trends. Finance & Commerce checks certificates of real estate value filed with the Minnesota Department of Revenue as well as data from the Northstar Multiple Listing Service, Realtor.com, county records and other sources.

Most of Peter Crain's work is done for clients who hire his Minneapolis-based Trestle Homes to build or renovate homes.

Crain carved out time in 2018 to complete a four-bedroom, five-bath, 4,353-square-foot model home at 3920 Thomas Ave. S. in Minneapolis. The finished product was chosen one of four Dream Homes in the Fall Parade of Homes. Crain sold it almost immediately to Manuel San Miguel and Monica McCracken for \$1.85 million. The deal closed Dec. 14.

"We've gotten three projects from that home already," Crain said. Crain teamed up on the model with Christine Frisk of Minneapolis-based [InUnison Design](#).

"She was really key to making it succeed," Crain said. "What sells a home is the way it feels." The way it feels begins with the home's setting in the Linden Hills neighborhood of the city.

“It was a great lot, biggest in the neighborhood,” Crain said. He bought the original home there in 2016 for \$455,000, then cleared the lot.

At first glance, the new home is another updated white farmhouse with sharp black trim and contemporary finishes.

The wide lot and deeply sloped back yard, however, allowed a single-car garage and intimate front yard, with a deep porch and French doors making them an extension of the living area inside. In the rear, the flat roof of the two-car garage in the lower level supports a broad main-floor deck that continues the length of the house.

A deeper look through an online photo tour reveals an artistic sensibility, with every view in every room composed like a still-life. The serene white and gray palette is balanced by unexpected shots of color, from a yellow sofa in an informal family room to blue cabinetry in the dining area to the oranges tucked into a rug and artwork and repeated in a wall in the laundry room. A low, wide bench seat anchors a tall window in the oversized front stairway, turning a simple landing into a place to linger and a view to enjoy from any floor. Natural brushed oak flooring adds texture without heaviness.

Even a small powder room sink becomes a meticulous arrangement, with the light wood framing the sides of the tall mirror accented with long, slender sconces and grounded with a black faucet and accents. Even the reflection in the mirror perfectly frames an accent window on the opposite wall.

At night the custom windows and French doors frame the lighted vignettes, creating a gallery of meticulously detailed and coordinated living spaces.

One of the most important aspects of the house is what you don’t see.

“It’s accessible,” he said. “You could live there the rest of your life.”

The home has an elevator, 36-inch doors, wide hallways and showers without barriers, eliminating barriers to walkers and canes. It would require only minor adjustments for full wheelchair use. The idea is to make homes “lifetime friendly,” he said.

Crain, a sculptor, also loved both residential and commercial architecture in college. He became an art teacher after graduation.

“It was the ’80s and all the architects were unemployed,” he said, laughing at the thought of a time when teaching art was considered a practical career move.

After 15 years of balancing art and teaching with summers working construction, he decided to focus on commercial construction — until 9/11 hit in 2001 and commercial work disappeared. He founded Trestle Homes and turned his eye for composition to new home design and renovations.

[Morgan Clawson](#) of Edina Realty, who listed and sold the Thomas Avenue home, said it reflects Crain’s portfolio.

“The attention to detail is really off the charts,” Clawson said.

“They planned that house for a year and a half,” he said. Buyers took notice right away.

“For a long time we just had one rendering, and that alone drew a lot of attention,” he said.

San Miguel and McCracken walked through two days after the home was completed and quickly made an offer.

Crain believes the Thomas Avenue house is popular because it reflects the way people love neighborhoods like Linden Hills and don’t want to leave as their needs and interests change.

“It’s about building for your lifetime,” Crain said.

**Related:**

[Photo tour of 3920 Thomas Ave. S., Minneapolis](#)