

[savvy builder]

by Beverly Smirnis,
photos by Vernon Wentz, Ad Imagery

Add together Carolyn Isler's prior background as a systems engineer and manager with IBM Corporation, plus the fact that two generations of her family before her were involved in home building and you've got a winning combination. Carolyn puts together a unique set of skills and experience and translates all of it directly into Isler Homes.

Let's start with her social savvy. Having the right presence on social media can go a long way for today's savvy builders. Carolyn has a consistent history on Houzz as a winner in the Best of Houzz Design category each year since 2013; the award is voted on by the Houzz community based on the most popular portfolio. Isler Homes also ranks at the highest level for client satisfaction by the Houzz community.

Whether perusing her Houzz postings or her website or talking to Carolyn in person, it quickly becomes obvious that she is capable and professional. There are numerous comments and photos to prove her ability to do meticulous preservation work on some of the architectural masterpieces in the highest of high-end neighborhoods. There were also new home projects and several other unique remodel projects underway when we met with her to learn more about her and Isler Homes' unique business model.

Carolyn's no-nonsense approach and her knowledge are a perfect balance, reflecting what's worthy of keeping and what's passé. We visited one luxury home that was built in the early 2000s and had been sitting on the market for several months without the desired level of traffic needed to sell it. Outside, Isler Homes had just removed ornate cast stone and was in the process of painting



**SOCIAL SAVVY + FORWARD-THINKING
+ CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING =
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the pink brick white. Inside, stained cabinets and wood and earth tones were being changed to white and gray tones with gold accents. This in itself, proved a lesson about how quickly tastes change!

“Buyers in the multi-million dollar price range fall into two categories. The first group, who are buying new or a more recently built home demand that it be current in every way; that means transitional and light, not the ornate and frilly or the heavy Old World styles of the last decade. The other group is the lover of history and architecture; they buy in neighborhoods like Park Cities in Dallas and seek to balance preservation with modern convenience and current style,” she explained.

“Building a new home is like designing a new system ensuring that the clients’ needs are met from the ground up. Additions, renovations, and remodels are like taking an existing system to the next

level to meet the clients changing lifestyle requirements while being mindful of the existing architecture,” says Carolyn.

Her new home buyers benefit from her experience in seeing what lasts versus what quickly passes as a fad. Her restoration and remodel clients benefit from her keen knowledge of current style. Her flexibility and open-mindedness attract others who observe an expert at work (often by following her on social media). In the process, Carolyn has discovered a somewhat untapped niche: working with people seeking to sell their homes. In the example described above, the existing owner is confident that by investing in remodeling now, he will see a higher return on the sales price and ensure a faster sale.

Much in the same manner that the niche in working with luxury home sellers developed, Isler Homes is developing another

following by an altogether different category of buyers—and that would be the luxury home buyers of tomorrow now known as the millennial buyers. What if they could build or remodel with a builder known for a level of quality good enough even for their parents' neighborhoods? That buyer who grew up in Park Cities or Preston Hollow simply can't do life in the suburbs. They seek to be close to the familiar neighborhoods of their childhood. Their "starter homes" will come with a price tag under or right at \$1 million. Carolyn Isler hopes to build that starter home they waited so long to buy and be there to build the next one for them.

In Dallas' redeveloping and high demand neighborhood of Midway Hollow, Carolyn answers to her younger buyers in a different way from the rest of the flock.

She's topping off and completely transforming existing homes instead of completely tearing them down and starting over. That's an answer that suits those who are adverse to wasting resources and those who wish to save here (on taxes, permits, impact fees) so they can gain more there (higher end finishes and home electronics features).

You could say that Carolyn Isler's career life has come full circle. It seems that she got her degree in engineering and worked in the world of computers



because she enjoys creative problem-solving. Eight years later, after she started her family, she decided to take another look at the family business and determined that building and remodeling could indeed satisfy that drive for creative problem-solving while keeping her closer to home with more flexible hours. She became interested in and studied interior design, then started Isler Homes in 2004, earned and promoted her rave reviews from customers, and hasn't looked back. ▼

"From client and vendor interaction to paperwork, Carolyn is very detail oriented and thorough. As a great communicator, she avoids misunderstandings and is the gold standard in our industry for honesty and trustworthiness." --**Chuck Brown, Sendera Title**