

CHARM CITY

Pam Sessions of Hedgewood Homes is everywhere.

*By Lauren Finney Harden
Photographed by Patrick Hoagerty*



Sessions at her unique Hedgewood Homes office space in Buckhead

You might have noticed some stunning, distinct villages popping up around Metro Atlanta. Hedgewood Homes (hedgewoodhomes.com), which has been in business since 1985, has quietly been dominating Atlanta's homebuilding industry, with more than 4,000 homes built under owners (and Atlanta high school sweethearts!) Pam Sessions' and Don Donnelly's belts. These new urbanists have a distinct, enviable style—here's how they've accomplished it.

For Pam Sessions and Don Donnelly of Hedgewood Homes, the starting point is simple: "We build neighborhoods and homes where we'd like to live ourselves," says Sessions. "We love great design and strive to bring beautiful aesthetics to all locations." Take, for example, their first mixed-use neighborhood, Vickery in Cumming, whose 600 architecturally unique homes, commercial village with store, restaurants and a Y, and 75 acres of parks and green space could be called revolutionary to some. Surrounding Vickery Village, the community hub, with schools within walking distance, it's definitely a neighborhood where inhabitants subscribe to a certain lifestyle, one that Sessions and Donnelly have been honing for years. (The original land for Vickery was their family farm plus two adjacent farms.) "We built Vickery because we wanted a lifestyle that wasn't available to us at that location," she says simply. "We prefer a diverse community, so we vary the housing offerings to attract folks at different stages of life from a wide variety of places," says Sessions.

Sessions, who studied photography with Ansel Adams, says she views "development and building through both a design and environmental lens," while her husband is "a natural artist when it comes to working with the land. He reads the land like others read a book—and understands how to make magical places where buildings and the environment peacefully coexist." You can see their work in places like downtown Woodstock and Norcross, or in neighborhoods like Voysey in downtown Alpharetta, Manchester in Atlanta and Southerland in Lake Claire.

As for what it's like to work as a husband-and-wife duo? Sessions notes, "The lines between work and play blur when you are fortunate enough to work in a creative industry. Because seeing and experiencing places and people in those places is critical to our work, you could say we are working all the time—best that we're doing it together."