

CLUSTERED IN KIRKLAND

Full of details and charm, a cottage never feels cramped

By Valerie Easton | Photographed by Mike Siegel

DAVID AND MONIQUE Visintainer hoped to stay in Seattle, but all the houses they looked at needed so much work. The young couple had their fill of that with their century-old home in Madrona. While they loved the craftsmanship in older houses, with a first baby on the way they weren't keen to take on a remodeling project. Poking around online, David came across a new cottage community in Kirkland. The couple drove over the bridge and fell in love with the place. Now they're happily settled, with daughter Sophia and Italian greyhounds Bruno and Zabel, into one of the 16 cottages at Danielson Grove.

At 1,600 square feet, their home is roughly half the size of most new houses in Kirkland. "We didn't want or need a huge house," says Monique. "You'd just have to furnish it." Their two-story, three-bedroom cottage is loaded with the quality detailing



The common gardens, designed by Todd Paul and his team at City Garden Services, perfectly match the scale of the cottages. The casual yet sophisticated touch adds greatly to the appeal of the development.

Photo: Mike Siegel / The Seattle Times

and cozy charm of an earlier era. Soaring ceilings, an open floor plan, built-ins and expansive windows lend a spacious feel. The huge closets, open kitchen and three bathrooms are in sharp contrast to the vintage Seattle houses they'd considered. A pull-down staircase gives easy access to attic storage. Even the baby's room has its own tiny bathroom squeezed beneath the eaves. Monique loves the newness of it, and David got the craftsmanship he admires.

Architect Ross Chapin suggests people look around the cottages he designs before he reveals the square footage. They're usually startled to learn he's able to fit everything they need into limited square footage without any feeling of being cramped or cutting corners.

Cottage buyers share common spaces, yet own their own property. While the Visintainers have minimal fenced front and back gardens, right outside their gate

is a grassy common courtyard, and down the path is a community center where they held Sophia's first birthday party. The Danielson Grove owner's association fee pays for common-area expenses and garden maintenance.

Setting the stage for community is what developers Jim Soules and Linda Pruitt of the Cottage Company do best. A wide variety of buyers, from retirees to singles and young families, have been attracted to their pocket communities. While each home has the signature cottage look, Danielson Grove has six different architectural plans and footprints and a wide range of colors and trims. Single-car garages are tucked away at one side of the property so people walk to their front doors.

The room-sized front porches that Pruitt describes as "not just an appendage" are well used. Unlike so many developers, they left the huge old conifers in place to



The red Dutch door is just one of the charming details that attracted the Visintainer family to their 1,600-square-foot cottage in Kirkland's new Danielson Grove development. Photo: Mike Siegel / The Seattle Times

shelter the new community. "We look out into the trees," says David. "It's like living in a lodge."

Ross Chapin's advanced color sense, combined with riotously planted, country-style gardens, are hallmarks of the Cottage Company's work. Warm shades of apricot, wheat, sage, rust, yellow and cream, in shingles and trim, differentiate the cottages. Generous borders of small trees, colorful shrubs, perennials and roses sweep through the common areas. There's not a whiff of the commercial or institutional in design or planting; all is comfortable and human-scale. Turns out the Visintainers bought a concept as well as a cottage.



[Top] The master bedroom has that tucked-under-the-eaves feeling, brightened by a skylight and generous windows. Clutter is minimized by a closet large enough to stow both dressers behind closed doors. [Bottom Left] Granite countertops and ceiling detailing are some of the quality features that attracted the Visintainers to their new cottage. The kitchen, family room, dining room and staircase are open to each other, making the cottage's ground floor feel spacious. [Right] A checkerboard Marmoleum floor, claw-footed tub and pedestal sink in the master bath evoke an earlier time, but with fresh finishes and new plumbing. Photo: Mike Siegel / The Seattle Times



Small is not cheap because . . .

Danielson Grove recently won a national housing award from the American Institute of Architects. However, at \$175 to \$250 per square foot, cottage price isn't proportionate to size. Here's why:

- Smaller and well engineered is more expensive. "Do you buy a car by the pound?" asks architect Ross Chapin.
- Expensive fixed elements, such as utilities, bathrooms and kitchens, are needed in every house no matter what the size. Unlike larger homes, the cottages don't have the less-expensive extras such as hallways, dens and foyers.
- Cost per square foot "doesn't take into account the 'livability quotient' of a house—how much livable area it has in relation to its size," says Chapin. Built-ins like desks and reading nooks, and double-duty spaces like family rooms, increase the livability quotient.
- Craftsman details such as hand-applied drywall and handmade glass tile also increase the cost. So do the common gardens and community center.
- "When a house is built with care, people respond with care—maintaining and fine-tuning it to their lives. A well-loved house will be a long-lasting house. This, to me, is the heart of sustainability," says Chapin.



[Above] The Visintainers' front windows and porch look out to the central grassy courtyard, a shared space where the community sets up a movie screen on summer nights. Photo: Mike Siegel / The Seattle Times

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