

ajchomefinder



COVER STORY

For very special guests

As we approach the holidays, it's a good time to begin preparing your home for friends and family. Experts offer advice on adding touches that make guest rooms more welcoming and luxurious. **G4**

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Erica George Dines

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FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYER

Couple find dream home on Craigslist

By Lori Johnston
For the AJC

Mike and Kristen Haddick started their house hunt in the traditional way, driving through neighborhoods and picking up fliers. Their hope was to find a fairly new home, but with architectural features that reflected age and character.

Their search took an unusual turn when they found a new Decatur home advertised on Craigslist. The home had been purchased on the DeKalb County Courthouse steps for \$43,000 by Epic Development. The company tore it down to the foundation and built a new home.

Mike, 29, a golf professional at Sumnergrove Golf Club in Newnan, and Kristen, 31, convention services manager at the W Atlanta Buckhead, chatted about their first place.

Q: What led to the start of your home search?

A: Kristen: We moved to the Atlanta area from Hilton Head Island, S.C., about three years ago. Then we got married almost two years ago, so we started looking about a year ago. We lived in Decatur briefly when we moved here, for a couple of months. We really fell in love with Decatur right off the bat. We knew we wanted to be closer to the city, so Decatur popped up pretty immediately.

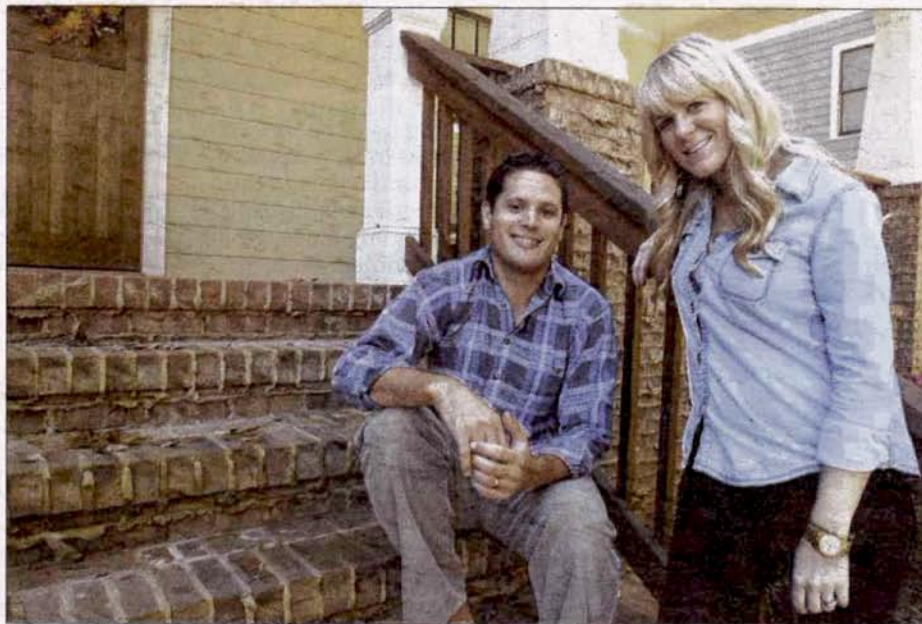
Q: What type of price range did you set?

A: Kristen: Between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

Q: How did you come across this home?

A: Mike: I saw some houses online and White Oak Hills popped up. I drove around to see the housing and where the neighborhood exactly was. When I drove through, I didn't think we could afford it.
Kristen: I found this house on Craigslist. It was a fluke really. I might have Googled White Oak Hills or something like that.

Q: Were you surprised to see a home listed on Craigslist?



A: Kristen: Yes. I thought it was fake. Then I looked it up on Realtor.com and saw that it was the same thing. The house was a bungalow. Literally this house had everything I wanted. It has the granite countertops, the stainless steel appliances, the fireplace, the hardwood floors. It was kind of too good to be true.

Q: How soon did you view it in person?

A: Kristen: Within a couple of days, we came over and looked at it. We had an offer within two weeks.

Q: What did you learn during negotiating the purchase?

A: Kristen: For me, it was surprising how much we were able to negotiate

with the house and working with the builder to kind of meet in the middle [the \$300,000 original asking price was lowered to \$270,000, and they purchased it for \$235,000]. I never really thought they would work with us as much as they did.

Christopher Oquendo For the AJC

Q: What are your commutes like?

A: Mike: About 50 minutes each way.
Kristen: About 25 minutes.

Q: Despite Mike's long commute, what do you enjoy about the location?

A: Kristen: I love going to the Decatur Square and walking around and going to eat and grabbing a beer.
Mike: There is a lot more up here going on. I think our quality of life is bet-

At a glance

Mike and Kristen Haddick's home, built in 2010 in Decatur's White Oak Hills neighborhood, has four bedrooms, 3 1/2 baths and about 1,700 square feet. They purchased it in October 2010. Homes listed in the neighborhood range from the \$100,000s to the \$230,000s.

ter. I was surprised by the amount of festivals. There's always something to do on the weekend.

Q: What do you love about having your own home?

A: Mike: It is a lot nicer house than I ever expected to be living in for my first home.

Kristen: Honestly, we pull up in our driveway all the time and we still get excited and talk about how much we love our house. We just love the coziness of it. It's really just everything we wanted, and we feel very lucky to have it.

"Literally this house had everything I wanted. It has the granite countertops, the stainless steel appliances, the fireplace, the hardwood floors. It was kind of too good to be true."

Kristen Haddick
Homeowner