



COURTESY PHOTO

Above. Realtor and craftsman Garry Tomashowski built this unique 1,500-square-foot rooftop atop an 800-square-foot cabin. It sold last year. Below, Tomashowski and wife, Angie.

Craftsman says passion drives his mountain designs

Garry Tomashowski focuses on quality materials

By JAMIE MCKEE REAL ESTATE MILLIONS

When Garry Tomashowski, owner of Mount Charleston Realty Inc., isn't selling homes on the mountain, he is engaging in his passion. He guts existing homes and starts from scratch. Tomashowski says he has refurbished about a dozen homes. His company purchases the homes based on their location.

"Passion of mountain design and how a home interfaces with the mountain environment play a large part in the projects I choose," he said.

Tomashowski has experience in design, contracting, building and woodworking, and he has found that his customers enjoy collaborating with him.

"Buyers appreciate being offered design and development possibilities. ... They allow a client to feel the passion and excitement a property may offer."

"I consider Garry a formidable builder and craftsman, with exceptional ability to visualize and express ideas that are in concert with the dreams of potential homebuyers, or ones who may want to build," former client Paul Bodor says. "This is an invaluable trait, and often not well understood, even when it is the emotional component that is the key factor in the buy/build/sell decision."

Two of Tomashowski's refurbished homes were featured in Cabin Life magazine last year.

One 800-square-foot home, which sold last year for \$300,000, featured a unique 1,500-square-foot rooftop. It's designed like a park and has a slate waterfall that flows into a river spanning the entire deck. It also has Austrian pine trees and artificial grass, private patio, dining area, seating area, smokehouse and barbecue area. It is accessed by an outside staircase. A cedar fence provides privacy but allows for views of the mountain.

Tomashowski says the A-frame cabin

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GARRY TOMASHOWSKI
OWNER, MOUNT CHARLESTON REALTY INC.

he and his wife, Angie, purchased in 2001 was heavily damaged by an electrical fire in 2009 while the couple were in the middle of a renovation project to turn it into a weekend rental.

Garry Tomashowski said he wanted something different for the home. Something that just wasn't another A-frame house on the mountain. "I wanted an interesting approach," he said.

He said many of the Mount Charleston cabins are small or medium-sized. When he refurbishes them, he uses quality material and high-end designs.

"People are looking for quality regardless of size," he said. Some of the custom touches he adds include hardwood flooring, knotty pine woodwork, exterior decks, custom tile and wall-to-wall, river rock-covered fireplaces.

"I perform almost all of the construction tasks required by each trade. ... It's challenging, reflective and humbling work."

His latest project is a home he designed 22 years ago, so he is, in effect, tearing up his own work. The 3,400-square-foot home, on the market for \$939,000, has a 35-foot-high pine ceiling and wide-span beamwork.

It boasts the most glasswork of any home on the mountain, with an atrium surrounded 180 degrees by windows. Tomashowski added exterior seating locations and water features and refinished the custom redwood exterior.



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PHOTOS BY TONYA HARVEY/REAL ESTATE MILLIONS
 This 3,500-square-foot Mount Charleston has a pine interior and lots of big windows to bring the view inside. Below, large glass windows make sure the view is the centerpiece of the home.



▶ MOUNTAIN: Realtor says sales in the area have increased this year

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the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

About 2 million people visit the area each year, to experience the stunning alpine views, ski in neighboring Lee Canyon, hike or camp. The Resort on Mount Charleston offers accommodations below the snow line, and the Mt. Charleston Lodge boasts individual cabins for romantic weekend getaways.

About 400 people live in this winter wonderland year round. If a mountain home is your heart's desire, the Tomashowskis are the people to talk to. Garry and Angie Tomashowski own Mount Charleston Realty Inc., and have been selling cabins, chalets, luxury homes and luxurious estates in the area for more than 20 years. They have been the No. 1 sales producers of Mount Charleston homes every year since 1994.

The mountain is also their home. Their three children — Katie, Brandon and Taylor — attended Mount Charleston's one-room schoolhouse, and Katie and Brandon eventually joined the family business.

"They grew up here," Garry Tomashowski says. "We've been doing this since they were 4 years old, holding their hands while we were showing properties up here. We taught them to be very confident and to do what they wanted to do, and they are doing very well in the business."

Taylor is the only hold out. She lives in Missouri, and her husband serves in the military.

Garry Tomashowski says mountain living isn't for everyone, but people who love the mountains can be found at

most income levels — from middle- to upper-class income.

"It's a passion-driven market," he says. "Buyers run the gamut, from people who have saved all their lives to live in the mountains to a millionaire who can pay cash."

"A lot of people would live here if they could," Angie Tomashowski adds. The Mount Charleston snow season can start as early as November and last as late as March, she said. The rest of the time the weather is like any other seasonal locale, with leaves that change color and fall off the trees in the fall. The overall temperature is 20 to 25 degrees cooler than Las Vegas.

Angie Tomashowski says 50 percent of the family's business is selling Mount Charleston homes, with the remaining half in the Las Vegas Valley market. She says there are 15 Mount Charleston homes on the market, ranging in price from \$200,000 to nearly \$3 million. Typically, there would be about 30 homes on the market. Some 23 mountain homes with prices ranging from \$90,000 to \$900,000 were sold this year. The husband-and-wife team of Realtors handled 15 out of that total.

"It's very strong. The demand has been highest by far this year" Garry Tomashowski says. "It reflects more confidence in the buyers."

Although Mount Charleston's housing market suffered along with the entire Las Vegas Valley during the Great Recession, Garry Tomashowski said the numbers are returning to normal. Mount Charleston home prices have increased 20 percent this year, but are still below construction cost, he said.

Even stalled lot sales are sputtering



This 3,500-square-foot Mount Charleston home, which Realtor Garry Tomashowski refurbished and placed on the market, features a winding staircase that connects the home's three levels.

again. Before the crash eight to 10 sites to build cabins were sold each year. After the downturn only one sale was made in more than two years, he said. That has picked up to a couple a year.

"It's a great sign of recovery," he says. About 70 percent of their clients purchase the homes as a second home, or he what he calls a "second full-time home" that people use every week or every day, he said. The remainder are permanent residents.

At the lower end of the price range are the four neighborhoods in Mount Charleston's Kyle Canyon, where lots range from 50 feet by 50 feet to one-quarter acre. At the higher end of the inventory is an authentic log cabin in nearby Lee Canyon going for \$1.8 million.

Garry Tomashowski says the differences between the two areas are views and services. Kyle Canyon consists of evergreen-covered mountains, which can seem either comforting or suffocating, depending on whether it's sunny, rainy or snowy — and, of course, on your state of mind.

Lee Canyon, which hosts the Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort, is more mountainous, with fewer trees. It is less populated than Kyle Canyon, with only a few full-time residents, Garry says, and is "off the grid," which makes access to water and power challenging.

Both areas offer dynamic, alpine views, he says. It depends on "whether you want to be in the painting or look at the painting."

The log home in Lee Canyon is on a 0.80-acre oversized lot. Garry categorizes the 6,000-square-foot, five-bedroom home as "Ponderosa style," and seeing it in person does bring to mind the rambling ranch on the old "Bonanza" television series.

The mountains may be beautiful, but they have a dangerous side, too. In summer 2013, the Carpenter 1 Fire ravaged 28,000 acres of the forest. The fire was ignited by lightning and enveloped the valley in smoke for several days.

Just last summer, a flash flood washed mud and debris into yards and homes.

The Tomashowskis say it comes with the territory.

"We live in the forest. You take the good with the bad," Angie Tomashowski says.

Garry Tomashowski naturally, thinks about business. "The overall real estate market was just getting going again. It didn't skip a beat."

To prevent future flooding, a \$3 million, 2,200-foot-long flood diversion project is underway. The project is financed by the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service.

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