



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports:

Trendmaker Homes Ranks Highest in Overall Customer Satisfaction among New-Home Builders in Houston

Darling Homes Ranks Highest in New-Home Design Study and Trendmaker Ranks Highest In New-Home Quality Study

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 10 September 2008 — Trendmaker Homes ranks highest in [customer satisfaction with new-home builders in the Houston, Texas, market](#), according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2008 New-Home Builder Customer Satisfaction StudySM released today. In addition, Darling Homes ranks highest in the New-Home Design Study and Trendmaker Homes ranks highest in the New-Home Quality Study also released today. Trendmaker Homes, part of Weyerhaeuser Corp., is headquartered in Houston.

“Home builders have adapted well to changes in the market that have necessitated a shift from an order-taking mode to an intensified focus on sales service and negotiation with prospective home buyers,” said Paula Sonkin, vice president of the real estate and construction industries practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “Strong home-building companies have recognized the importance of offering superior product quality, delivering homes on time and providing skilled sales staff in order to excel in hypercompetitive markets.”

Overall Customer Satisfaction

The New-Home Builder Customer Satisfaction Study, now in its 12th year, includes satisfaction ratings of builders in [33 of the largest U.S. home-building markets](#). Nine factors drive [overall customer satisfaction with home builders](#) (listed in order of importance): builder’s sales staff (15%); builder’s warranty/customer service staff (15%); workmanship/materials (14%); price/value (14%); home readiness (13%); construction manager (13%); recreational facilities provided by the builder (7%); builder’s design center (6%); and location (4%).

Trendmaker Homes achieves a score of 837 on a 1,000-point scale and performs particularly well in the Houston market in five of nine factors: construction manager; workmanship/materials; home readiness; location; and recreational facilities provided by the builder. Following Trendmaker Homes in the market rankings are Highland Homes (833) and KB Home (826).

The average customer satisfaction index score in Houston is 766—13 points below the 33-market average of 779. However, satisfaction has improved substantially in the Houston market in 2008—up 24 points since 2007.

“Efforts by builders to respond to changes in the market landscape have contributed to the increase in customer satisfaction in 2008,” said Sonkin. “The role of the salesperson has increased in importance as a driver of satisfaction, meaning that more negotiation is occurring during the sales process. As a result, many home buyers are benefiting from generous sales incentives offered by builders. For example, upgraded features that used to be considered options—such as granite countertops—are now being included as standard, which increases the perceived value of the home and subsequently results in increased satisfaction. In addition, builders are doing a particularly good job of delivering homes both on time and fully complete. With new-home prices on the decline in many areas, as well as larger inventories and renewed efforts of home builders to truly delight customers, it’s a great time for consumers to consider buying a new home.”

The study finds that 92 percent of new-home buyers in the Houston market report receiving sales incentives. Among Houston-area home buyers who report receiving incentives when purchasing their home, the average sales incentive totaled more than \$12,300. The types of incentives that home buyers report receiving most often include a reduction in the base price of the home and credit toward options and upgrades.

The study also finds that 39 percent of new-home buyers in the Houston market perceive that their home is environmentally friendly, but a vast majority of these home buyers—66 percent—say that their home builder did not identify the home as “green.” The top green features that home buyers believe a new home should include are: energy-efficient heating and air-conditioning units; energy-saving appliances; and energy-saving lighting.

2008 New-Home Design Study

The J.D. Power and Associates New Home Design Study,SM now in its second year, measures [customer experiences in 33 markets with design and aesthetic aspects of their new homes](#). Eight factors drive satisfaction with new-home design: floor plan (17%); master/primary bathroom (15%); kitchen (13%); ability to customize (13%); interior comfort/environment (12%); flooring (11%); exterior architectural design (11%); and windows and exterior doors (8%).

[Overall satisfaction with new-home design in the Houston market](#) has increased to 781 in 2008, up by 30 points from 751 in 2007.

Darling Homes ranks highest in new-home design in the Houston market, followed by Highland Homes and Trendmaker Homes, respectively.

2008 New-Home Quality Study

The J.D. Power and Associates New-Home Quality Study,SM now in its second year, measures the [occurrence and impact of construction problems experienced by new-home owners in 33 markets](#). The study utilizes an index that takes into account the number of problems that occur, the severity of problems and size of the home, and covers 41 different problem categories for the following aspects: bathroom; drywall; electrical/appliances; flooring/stairs; home exterior; interior paint; kitchen; windows/doors; and other significant problems.

Trendmaker Homes ranks highest in [new-home quality in the Houston market](#), followed by Ashton Woods and Centex Homes, respectively.

Home quality in the Houston market has decreased since 2007, averaging 811 in 2008—down by 15 points since the previous year.

To be included in the studies, Houston-area builders must have closed 125 or more homes in the market in 2007. The new homes are located in the following counties: Brazoria, Ft. Bend, Galveston, Harris and Montgomery.

These studies are based on responses from 50,837 buyers of newly built single-family homes who provided feedback after living in their homes from four to 18 months, on average. There were 4,603 respondents in the Houston market. For more comprehensive builder rankings for all 33 U.S. markets, visit www.jdpower.com/homes.

For more information, read an [article](#), watch a [video](#) or view [new-home builder customer satisfaction ratings](#) on JDPower.com.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company operating in key business sectors including market research, forecasting, performance improvement, training and customer satisfaction. The company’s quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. For more information on [home building and home improvement](#), [car reviews and ratings](#), [car insurance](#), [health insurance](#), [cell phone ratings](#), and more, please visit JDPower.com. J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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NOTE: Three charts follow.

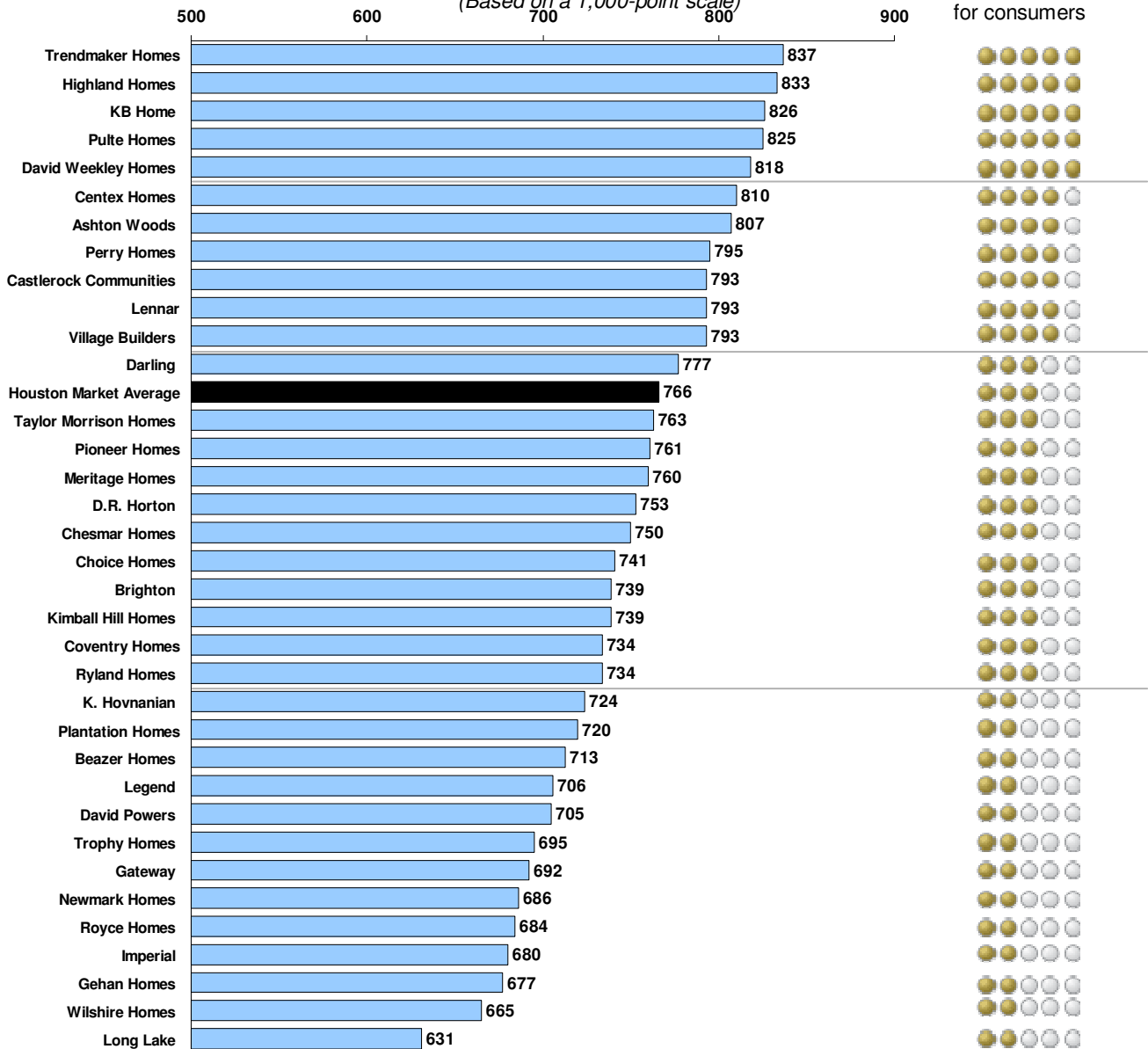
J.D. Power and Associates 2008 New-Home Builder Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Overall Satisfaction Index Scores

Houston, Texas

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)

JDPower.com
Power Circle RatingsTM
for consumers



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2008 New-Home Builder Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Power Circle Ratings Legend

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

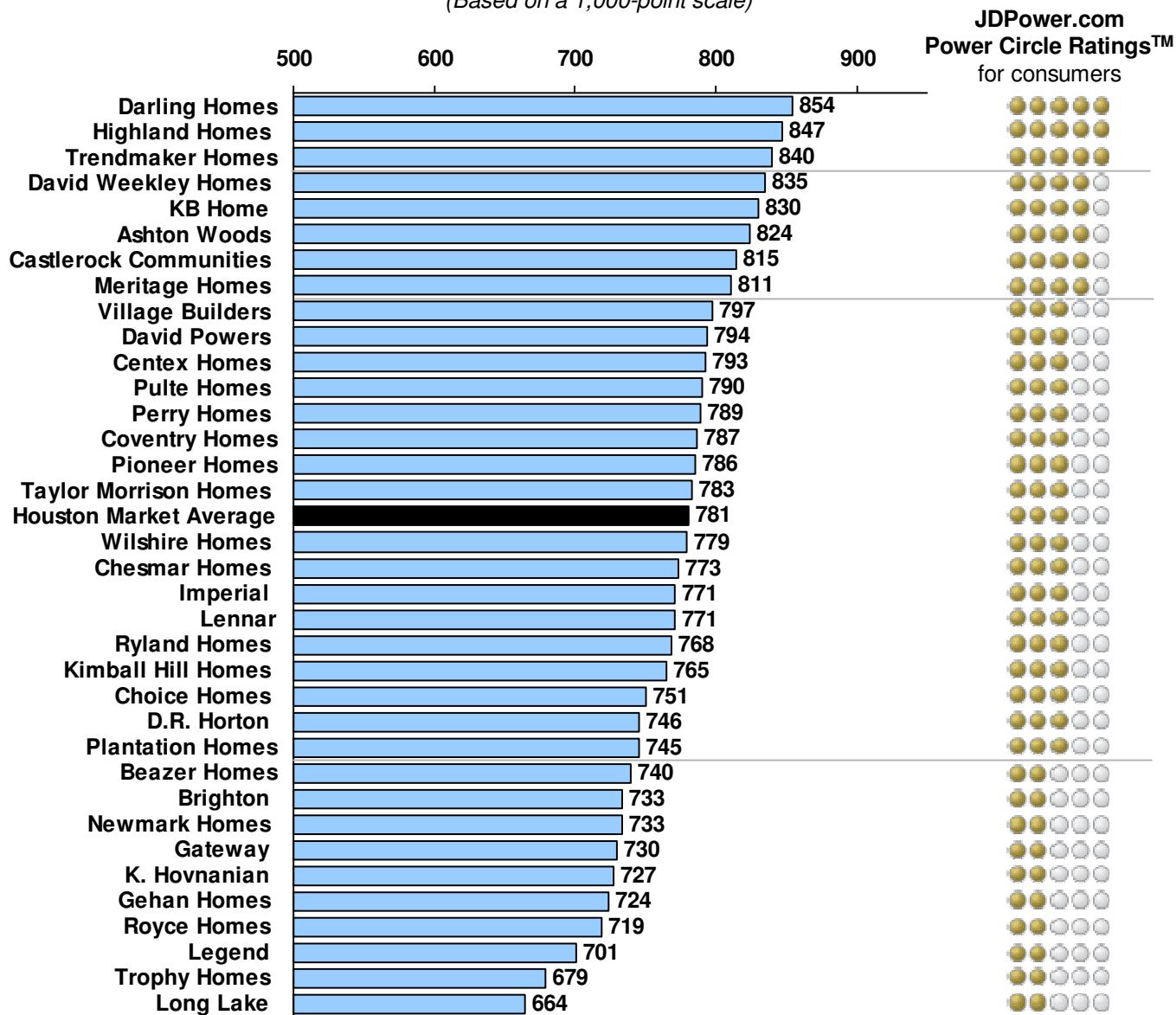
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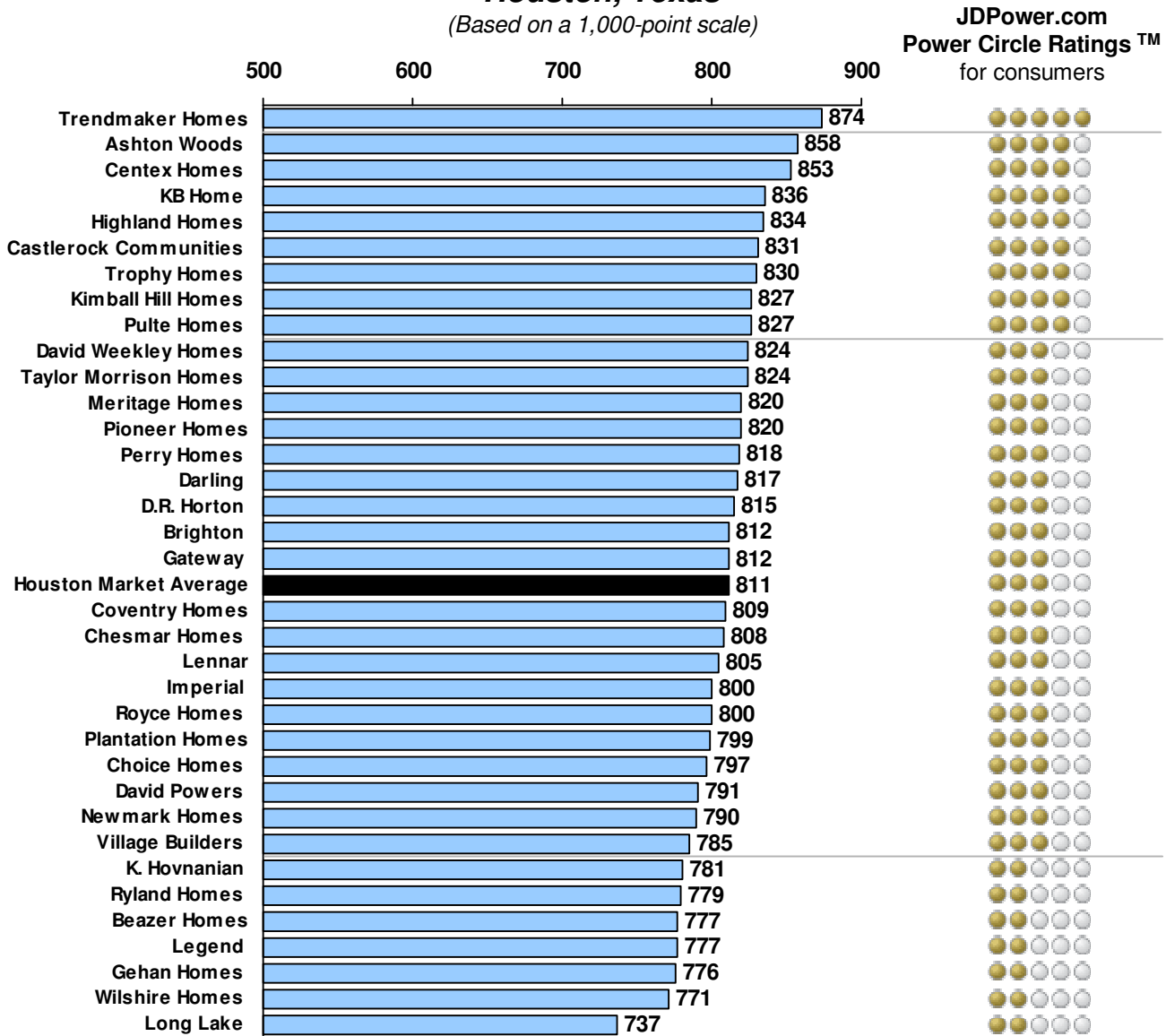
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J.D. Power and Associates 2008 New-Home Quality StudySM

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