

# Why developers love community propane systems



**For Texas developer Clint Jones, community distribution systems provide builders and their clients with the gas amenities they demand without taking up valuable lot space.**

By Jeff Lee

When developer Clint Jones is searching for the right land deal for a new home development, he's looking foremost at location and market demand. After that, he'll consider factors such as topography and the availability of utilities like water and wastewater.

One factor he knows he doesn't need to worry about? Natural gas. That's because Jones, owner of Regal Land Development in Austin, Texas, has become adept at planning developments using community propane systems. By using centralized propane distribution, he can offer builders and their buyers a gas system that operates just like natural gas, even if the natural gas main is miles away.

Jones's first experience with community propane was for a high-end residential resort neighborhood called the Reserve at Lake Travis, northwest of Austin. The area lacked access to natural gas, and while the lots at the community would have been large enough to bury individual tanks, it would have gotten crowded in a hurry, Jones says.

"Even with an acre, these home sites are on septic systems," Jones says. "They're multimillion-dollar homes, so they might want a swimming pool. If everywhere you turn you're burying something, at some point, you run out of room."



*Along with propane-fueled water heaters and clothes dryers, propane cooktops — indoor and outdoor — are popular in the Austin market.*

Instead of individual tanks, Jones worked with Harris Baker, [President of Austin-based HBH Gas Systems](#), to design a community propane system. And after the success of the first project, he's been using centralized propane systems ever since. "The benefit is, I don't have to think much about the gas," he says. "That's not a deciding factor, whether there's gas in the location. The propane company can come in and make it all happen."

## Density benefits

While the Reserve at Lake Travis was a larger, higher-end development, the density benefits have become even more apparent as Jones develops neighborhoods intended for production builders with smaller lots. His latest development, Lakes Edge, in Central Austin, is a 120-home development with a combination of 70-foot-wide and 80-foot-wide lots, each 120 feet deep.

"You can get a house on there, you can get a driveway, you can get a swimming pool," Jones says. "You're going to struggle to get a septic tank in there as well. [Community propane] really does help in the neighborhoods where I've got more density, where the lots are smaller, because I don't have to worry about spacing for one other item to be buried."

Jones has also learned that bringing in the propane company early can improve coordination among all the contractors. At Lakes Edge, the propane tanks are centralized outside of the entry gate to the community. "That means you don't have propane trucks barreling through like you do for individual propane tanks," Jones says. "Because of the work they're doing with the fencing around it, it's kind of hidden, you don't even notice it."

Homeowners also benefit from having the propane provider bill them for their gas as they use it, rather than having to pay upfront for deliveries. "It's probably an unnoticed benefit to the customer, but it's definitely a benefit," Jones says.

## Marketability for builders

As a developer, Jones has to ensure the builders he works with have all the amenities they need to make their homes marketable. Forgoing gas entirely is simply not an option.

"Any neighborhood would be an oddity if it didn't have gas," Jones says. "Everybody else has it, so you just try to do a good quality [propane] system, with a good quality operator, so that you can compete. If you don't do that, you're at a disadvantage."

At Lakes Edge, the builders, [Ashton Woods](#) and [Trendmaker Homes](#), agree to install at least three propane appliances as part of the agreement with Pinnacle. In return, Pinnacle provides all of the gas infrastructure at its own cost. The builders frequently opt to install gas cooktops, a popular amenity in this market, along with energy-efficient propane water heaters and clothes dryers.

"I'm always thinking about not just electric but also gas as a central component of every neighborhood."

Over the past decade, outdoor cooking has become extremely popular in the Austin market, Jones says. "Builders are getting more and more to where they offer an outdoor built-in gas cooktop for barbecuing," he says.

Beyond the gas applications in each home, Jones also looks at opportunities to use propane in community amenities. It might be used to fuel a community pool heater or a clubhouse cooktop. "In some of our neighborhoods, we've even looked at gas lamps for some of our lighting, just as a nicety," he says. "I'm always thinking about not just electric but also gas as a central component of every neighborhood."

Becoming adept at incorporating propane community systems makes Jones well prepared for future developments where natural gas is unavailable — a common occurrence in the submarkets outside of Austin.

"It certainly makes it easier for me to design out and plan out," he says. "I've got another development that I'm working on in the planning stages. Now that I know what I'm doing, anytime I look at anything like that, I am looking at the prospect of having HBH Gas Systems come in and work with me. It just makes a lot of sense to do that."

**Off the Grid? No Problem.**

# Blue. It's the new Green.

Steer your off-grid development away from inefficient, carbon-heavy electricity toward more sustainable development fueled by gas. Half the cost of electricity, clean burning and preferred by homeowners around the globe, LP gas is the obvious choice. HBH Gas Systems and Ferrellgas have come together to provide the capital, engineering, construction, operations and tenured gas service for developments of all sizes - any time, any place.



HBH Gas Systems, the nationwide leader in community gas systems, will add value and the enhanced marketability of dual-fuels to your development with reliable and affordable underground gas service. Contact HBH Gas Systems today to learn how a Central Gas Distribution System can provide your off-grid development with the individually-metered gas service your customers deserve. Call 512 - 306 - 0073 or visit [www.hbhsystems.com](http://www.hbhsystems.com).

[www.hbhsystems.com](http://www.hbhsystems.com)



**Mark.Baresel@HBHSystems.com**  
**P: (630) 709-5203**

©2006 HBH Gas Systems

[propanetrainingacademy.com](http://propanetrainingacademy.com) | [propane.com](http://propane.com) | [propanecouncil.org](http://propanecouncil.org)

Copyright ©2018 Propane Education & Research Council. All rights reserved.

[Home](#) | [Register](#) | [Press Releases](#) | [Contact](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Find a Propane Retailer](#)

Propane Education & Research Council 1140 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Suite 1075, Washington DC 20036