



David Mandel and Cameron Blazer have waited nearly two years – longer than they’ve been married – for their new house to be built. Finally, the first home they’ll own is almost finished. The timing is less than ideal, since the couple also is expecting their first child to be born at the same time. But they say their home is worth the wait, and they’re glad they put down \$1,000 in March 2004 to lock in a sale price.

“We really weren’t thinking we could afford a house at all,” Blazer says. “We just kind of plunged in.”

If they had not acted when they did, they might have missed out on owning a home on Johns Island. Plus, they’re new 1,650-square-foot, two-story town home in The Gardens of Whitney Lake has appreciated so much that they say they could not afford to buy it today. They’ll pay about \$174,000 when they close, hopefully in May 2006, and they say the market value is above \$200,000. The median home sale price on Johns Island was \$235,000 in 2005, so Blazer and Mandel consider themselves lucky.

“This is the only thing we could have afforded,” Blazer says.

That’s not to say they don’t love their new home and neighborhood. The developer took care to leave lots of old trees standing, the streets are wide with nice sidewalks, parking is screened in the rear of the homes and the elaborate landscaping plans aim to create a garden feel throughout the development.

“I think we’ll live here for a while, and let the community grow,” Mandel says.

The couple married in August 2004, the same time Blazer, now 30, entered the Charleston School of Law. Since then, they have rented a West Ashley house from Mandel’s parents. Their rent is about \$800 a month, and their housing costs will increase quite a bit with the new home, considering they’ll pay about \$200 a month in regime fees on top of their mortgage. It will be tight until Blazer can practice law in the summer of 2007. Until then, they’ll continue to be a single-income family. Mandel, 33, earns about \$40,000 a year working full-time as an editor with a local publishing company and through freelance work. Fortunately, they also have Blazer’s student loans as a buffer.

Mandel and Blazer both say their situation is typical in the Lowcountry – two young professionals who can barely afford to buy a home. They both agree that is a huge problem.