

Yards may become rare in energy-scarce cities

In the year 2055 A.D., franchise hamburger restaurants and discount tire stores will no longer randomly dot the landscape, but this doesn't mean that life will lose it savor.

So the energy crisis makes private cars and drive-in eateries obsolete. Americans will have private barbecue grills — and kitchens that are the nicest room in the house.

These are just a few of the predictions of two Michigan State University faculty members who teach architectural design in MSU's College of Human Ecology.

Duncan Case and Lansing architect Ricardo Anselmo, specialists in the Department of Human Environment and Design, say one thing will be missing from the future picture: the private yard, front and back.

"THE YARD is the last vestige of the frontier for Americans," says Case. "The yard represents one of our most tenuous myths — that to be somebody, you have to own a piece of land."

It's this persistent myth, partly represented by the mistaken notion that renters are "second-class citizens who don't pay taxes," that will tend to complicate life in the next 75 years.

Case and Anselmo say one result of the energy crunch will be the gradual elimination of "suburban sprawl." More people will live closer together, either in single-family dwellings sharing a common "park" area or in condominium or cooperative apartments

within walking distance of shopping and business areas.

"It will be difficult for Americans to give up their large, private green spaces in an era when real estate developers vie for land once occupied by service stations and franchise restaurants," Case predicts.

"But smaller green spaces can still accommodate barbecue grills."

IN SPITE OF their innate individualism, Americans will be forced to get along better with their much closer neighbors. "This means resisting the urge to put up fences or to sue somebody if you fall downstairs," Case said.

Another effect will be the decline of desire to "keep up with the Joneses" through competitive exterior decor and landscaping. Anselmo said. "High density housing will make for nondescript exteriors and creatively decorated interiors."

The architect, who designed MSU's University Club, predicts that appreciation for antiques and crafts will still thrive in interiors filled with "ergonomic" furniture — waterbeds and chairs that conform to individual body contours.

Kitchens, he says, will not only be equipped with advanced microwave ovens, but instant-freeze machines for ice-making and food storage, electronic screens for scanning supermarket shelves and pneumatic tubes for home delivery of groceries.

OTHER REAL possibilities are dishwashers which operate with sound waves instead of water and the demise of vacuum cleaners in a solar energy environment that eliminates dust and soot.

General cost-cutting, another aspect of the energy crunch, will lead to much broader acceptance of the "pre-fab" housing that is somewhat scorned at the moment, Case and Anselmo agree.

"The need for experts, such as plumbers and electricians, drive housing costs up," Anselmo pointed out. "In the future, dwellers will be able to buy toilets or showers — whole rooms — they can easily install themselves."



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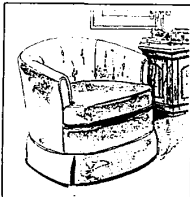
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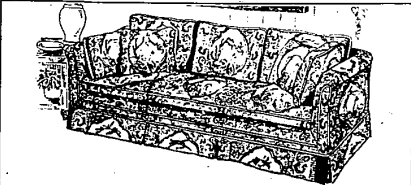
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