

House building 'downsized' in '81

Richard Headlee, Republican gubernatorial hopeful in the Aug. 10 primary, split this week with his party's efforts to remove the Tisch Independent Citizens Party from the November general election ballot.

"Any effort to remove the Tisch Independent Citizens Party from the November general election ballot is misguided and should be abandoned," said Headlee.

"The supporters of Bob Tisch collected over 22,000 petition signatures, and anyone with such a significant constituency should have the opportunity to take their case to the voters of Michigan in November.

"A candidate with that kind of support should be defeated fair and square through the political process rather than through the legal technicalities in the courts," said Headlee, a Farmington Hills insurance executive and chairman of the board of Oakland University.

"By leaving Tisch on the ballot, it will provide for an open and public debate on his questionable tax-slashing proposals. It should be noted that up to now, those proposals have not saved the taxpayers of our state one dime."

House builders are following the lead of car makers by "downsizing" and dropping costly add-on features, according to the Western Wayne Oakland County Board of Realtors.

"There was a great deal of talk about the need for 'no-frills' housing as prices kept going up during the '70s," new homes kept getting bigger with more and more amenities.

"Now the affordability crunch is combining with changing lifestyles to reverse that trend. A lot of this may stem from the entrance of more single persons into the market and a desire for lesser needs for home maintenance."

A STUDY OF new houses built in 1981 shows an average square footage of 1,550, or 46 less than a year earlier and 106 less than in the peak housing year of 1978. Aiding the drop last year were one in every four new houses built with less than 1,200 square feet of living space.

The study found fewer new houses being built with four or more bedrooms, 20 percent compared to 24 percent in 1978. Those with three bedrooms

also dropped from 64 to 59 percent while those with two bedrooms or less climbed from 12 percent in 1978 to 21 percent in 1981.

More smaller homes last year also brought a significant change in the proportion equipped with two or more bathrooms and those with 1½ baths. The percentage with a single bathroom grew from 15 percent in 1978 to 20 last years.

Other trends:

• Fireplaces, a fixture in 64 percent of new homes in 1978, slipped to only 55 percent by the end of 1981.

• Inclusion of central air conditioning systems, however, continued its growth. The 58 percent reported in 1978 new homes climbed to 65 percent in 1981.

• Perhaps reflecting the growth in the singles market, fewer new homes are being built with a garage for more than one car or with a carport.

• Just as car buyers are seeking improved gas mileage, home seekers apparently are looking for lower fuel cost.

• While electricity continues as the heating source for half of new homes, there is a continuing shift to use of natural gas and a drop away from oil. Other methods also have come into increased use during the past five years. Including such heat sources as wood, coal and solar energy, this other

category applied to 7 percent of new 1981 homes, up from only 2 percent five years earlier.

"WHILE IT doesn't show up in the study, the design of much new housing also is changing," Mason said.

"As a result, there is a trend away from formal living rooms toward family rooms where more activity is centered.

"Areas of little use, such as hallways, also are being eliminated to make the most of available space."

IN HOUSING sales news, Use closed deals were up 42 percent May 1982, as reported by Michael J. Bartlett, general sales manager of Real Estate One in Farmington Hills.

"Perhaps we now see light at the end of the tunnel," said Bartlett, "because June closings were the highest for our company since August 1981.

"As usual, over 80 percent of the sales in 58 metropolitan Detroit communities used the assumption of mortgage or land contract of financing. The median interest rate continued to be 11 percent, with a high of 16.5 percent and the low, a sale on land contract with no interest."

"The median sales price was \$54,000, down from \$55,500 the previous month, and the median down payment was \$12,000, slightly above May's \$10,011."

Headlee tells GOP: Leave Tisch alone

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