Housing Mortgage Rates

Lender	30-year fixed rate+points	15-year fixed rate+points	Adjustable rate+points
Comerica Bank	10.125% 1+1	9.75% 1+1	8.25 1+1
D&N Mortgage	10% 1.5+1	10% .875+1	8% 1+1
Empire Realty Credit	9.75% 4	9.75% 2.75	8.25% 3
Firemans Fund Mortgage	10.375 .75	10 1+1	8.5 2+1
First Federal of Michigan	10.375% 1+1	10.125% 1+1	8.25% 1+1
First of America Southeast	10.125% 1+1	9.875% 1+1	8.5% 1+1
Group One Mortgage	10% 1±1	9.75% 1+1	8.5% 2+1
Guardian Mortgage	9.5% 3+1	9.5% 2+1	8.5% 2+1
Huntington Mortgage	10.125% 2	9.875% 2.125	9.5% 3
Independence One	10.25% .625+1	10.125% .25+1	-- --
Lambrecht Company	10.125% 2+1	9.875% 2+1	8.375% 2+1
Mortgage Connection	10.125% .5+1	9.875% 1.5+1	8 2+1
National Bank of Detroit	10.375% 1+1	10% 2+1	8.75% 1+1
North American Financial	10.125% 1+1	9.875% 1+1	8.5% 1+1

Source: Residential Mortgage Consultants, Weekly Mortgage Reporter

New houses smarter

(AP) — The house of the future will have a whirlpool bathtub, a spacious kitchen and automation sophisticated enough to flip off the lights with a spoken word, according to a survey by the National Association of Home Builders.

While the exteriors of houses are not likely to change during the next two decades, their insides will become larger, and kitchens and bathrooms will play a key role, NAHB director of research Gopal Ahluwalia predicted in the August issue of Housing Economics.

"Houses are going to get smarter," he wrote. "The most significant and dramatic changes in the future are not likely to be in design but in bringing the technology into the home."

BOB BUESCHER, president of Buescher Homes, agrees.

"Look at what the computer did to business technology. Automation will do the same thing for home technology," he said.

Kitchens will have plenty of counter space, islands in the center and a walk-in pantry.

Bathrooms will continue to grow in number and size, Ahluwalia wrote, and more money will be spent on them as consumers buy a separate shower and a tub with a whirlpool.

"A WHIRLPOOL is a must," Buescher said. "We build very few homes without a tub."

Tile floors in bathrooms will be replaced by cultured marble.

To conserve water, more houses will use low-flush toilets and reduced-flow shower heads.

Voice-controlled automation will become standard in the next decade.

"They're looking for time-savers," said Ron Flohr, Worthman Homes president. "We're getting lazier and lazier."

In 1988 the average house covered 2,000 square feet. The NAHB's survey of consumer preferences shows move-up buyers are looking for houses with 2,300 square feet.

TWO-STORY HOUSES with basements have replaced single-story houses, prevalent in the 1960s, as the most popular choice.

"Openness is going to be prevalent," said Larry Lengacher, president of Star Builders by Lengacher. "Cathedral ceilings, skylights to let the outdoors in.

"Lots of glass, probably the number one thing people want."

The NAHB is developing a "smart house" with a wiring system designed to consolidate the television, telephone, security, doorbell, thermostat and power.

"There will be universal wall outlets into which any appliance, telephone or television can be plugged," Ahluwalia predicted.

Study condos before buying

Condominiums, and their maintenance-free lifestyles, have traditionally attracted singles and busy professionals who don't have the time or desire to mow lawns or shovel snow from their driveways. Just as often, individuals choose a condo rather than a conventional house because of price.

But condos aren't for everyone, and the Farmington Hills-based Michigan Association of CPAs urges prospective buyers to review the pros and cons before buying a condo.

IN A condominium, you own an individual unit was well as a share of the development's common property and facilities, such as a swimming pool or tennis court. But you generally do not own the property surrounding your condo and may not even have final say on the look of your condo's exterior.

While operation and maintenance of the condo's common property are not the owner's concern, the fees for such services are. In some developments, monthly maintenance charges can run as high as several hundred dollars — in addition to mortgage payments.

FOR THE MOST part, condominium owners do get the same tax treatment as other homeowners. You are entitled to deduct mortgage interest, property taxes and any casualty losses you may incur. In addition, all the rules relating to the sale of a principal residence apply to condominiums, including the once-in-a-lifetime $125,000 exclusion of profits to anyone 55 or older who meets the ownership and use requirements.

Some special tax considerations exist solely for condo owners. In rare instances, part of the monthly maintenance fee may be deductible on your federal income tax return. Occasionally, you may also be able to deduct property taxes assessed on the development's common elements.

WHEN A share of your maintenance fees is used to pay taxes, for instance, you may be entitled to a deduction. Similarly, you can often deduct any mortgage interest on your share of common property, such as a social hall where residents gather.

Another advantage can be found in developments that use cash reserves to improve and replace structures in common areas. In such cases, an individual owner may be able to add his reserve contributions to the condo's original cost and thus trim capital gains when he decides to sell the condo.

Before buying a condo, you should try to investigate the type of reserve fund offered by the development. Remember, not all condos are equal. Your actual financial liability for a condo can vary greatly depending on several factors, the reserve fund being just one.

WHEN CALCULATING the actual cost of a condo, you also need to determine the exact purpose of the monthly maintenance fees. How much money is targeted for future expenses? Are security or other services, such as garbage collection, included? Are any major repairs pending?

The amount of the fee can change from year to year, depending on circumstances. Shoddy construction on a newly developed condo may result in a substantial increase in fees in just a few years. If your developer has built other condominiums, ask those tenants if their maintenance fees have risen and why.

Find out about the other owners. If some have refused to pay their share for the development's upkeep, you and other owners may have to make up the difference. Ask the association about its priorities and plans.

YOU MAY not want to pay more maintenance fees in order to establish a fully staffed day care center, but if the rest of the association votes in favor of such a facility, you'll be obligated to pay your share.

Carefully read the association's bylaws. If you operate a business out of your home, make sure the association permits such activity. Bylaws can also place limitations on your ability to rent your condo to someone else — a factor that can be of critical importance if the condo is a second home. The rules and bylaws may also place restrictions on your home-entertainment activities, such as barbecues and parties.