

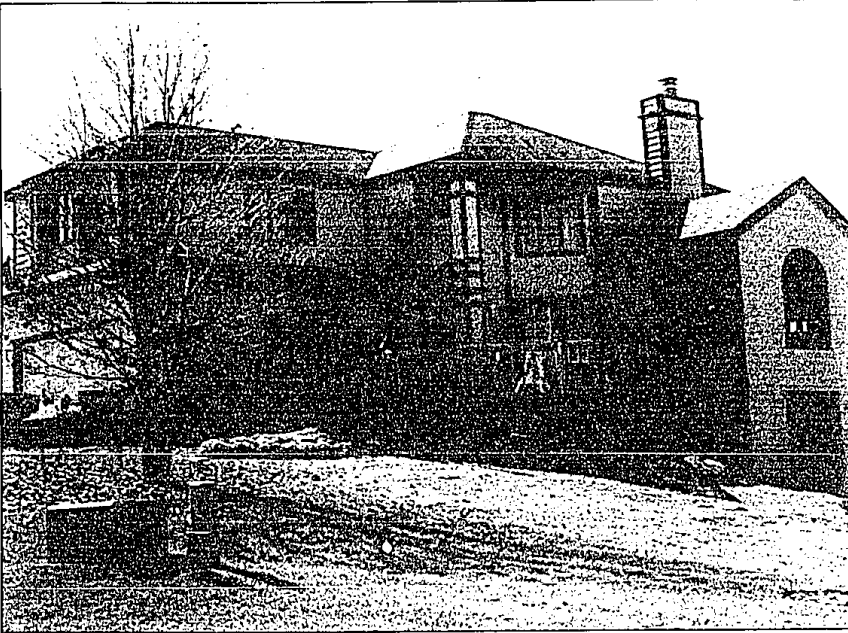
Building Scene

Merilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300



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The Home Mechanix Dream Home, built by Gary Sabo of Future Homes in Davison, incorporates wood construction techniques

that earned it the American Wood Council's Design For Better Living Award.

BILL PARKER/staff photographer

Readers' poll leads to wood house design

By Bill Parker
staff writer

What are the desires of home buyers in today's market? A workable functional kitchen, energy efficiency, low maintenance and a spacious pantry, according to a reader poll taken by Home Mechanix Magazine.

The American Wood Council and Home Mechanix Magazine co-sponsored the poll last fall that asked readers to describe their dream home. More than 200 readers responded, and those responses were incorporated by Stephen Mead Associates of Des Moines, Iowa, into the design of the 1,950-square-foot "Home Mechanix Dream Home."

"We wanted to design a relatively affordable package, but one that encapsulated as many of the readers' responses as possible," explained Mead. "A lot of readers wanted a sense of space so they didn't feel they were crawling over other family members. I think we have accomplished that. The house lives much larger than it actually is."

TO ACHIEVE THAT sense of spaciousness, Stephen Mead Associates designed the house — located in the Crescent Hills Subdivision in Ortonville — with several features. In addition to a spacious kitchen with an adjacent greenhouse/solarium breakfast area, the house also features a two-story entrance, a columned dining room leading to a screened porch and sweeping deck, a large workshop and adjacent storage area easily accessible from the garage, a huge master suite, french doors and a window seat.

"One of the unique aspects of the house is the way spaces relate to one another," added Mead. "There isn't a

lot of wasted space, but the house isn't cramped, either."

An example includes a work station (desk and book shelves) which was added to a widened hallway on the second floor. Such "nooks of storage" could be used by children or parents for work or play.

The house — built by Gary Sabo of Future Homes Inc. in Davison — also incorporates advanced wood construction techniques that earned it the American Wood Council's Design For Better Living Award.

"The council recognizes houses that feature the use of new wood products and systems and innovative design," explained Wally Poure, regional marketing director of the American Wood Council.

These construction techniques include a permanent wood foundation, interlock lap-sliding on the exterior walls. The house also conforms to the Code Plus building code.

The permanent wood foundation is used in place of a concrete foundation with the aim of providing a drier, warmer environment. The wood foundation is constructed of pressure-treated lumber and plywood walls set on a gravel base and back-filled with gravel. The walls are insulated with a high R-factor insulation providing a warm basement environment. And because wood doesn't settle like a concrete foundation, there tend to be no cracks or leaks in the basement walls.

The house is priced in excess of \$189,000. It was recently featured in the Parade of Homes '89, a builder's show sponsored by the American Wood Council and 11 north Oakland County Builders. The house is open for viewing by appointment. Call Future Homes at 653-3490 for an appointment.

Site contamination concerns raised

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Intensifying environmental concerns continue to trouble land developers and if the trend continues, it could conceivably drive smaller developers out of business.

Attorney George Fulkerson, of the Troy law firm of Dean and Fulkerson, told members of the Builders Association of Southeast Michigan Wednesday that environmental concerns are today's "moral imperative" and unless builders — especially small builders — learn to anticipate and protect themselves, they're in for a rough ride.

Environmental concerns will squeeze out the smaller developer because he does not have the resources to comply with all the regulations and requirements being placed on him, Fulkerson said.

"That may very well change, but

greater enforcement is the trend," he said, adding the slow growth movement prevalent in southeast Michigan uses environmental concerns as one of the key weapons in the arsenal to stop development.

Historically, building and the environment have always been related, but the emphasis and the nature of that relationship has drastically changed, Fulkerson said. "It's become magnified over the years."

"We have moved from a 'protection from nuisance' theory, which implies a certain amount of negligence, to a point where liability is no longer dependent on negligence," he said. Today, developers can be liable for environmental problems by virtue of land ownership, regardless of whether they caused the problems.

In almost every case where an environmental concern is raised, the developer is bound to lose because the courts almost always support the

environmental concern, he said.

"Builders are faced with a myriad of laws and regulations," he said, adding that there are currently more than 200 laws addressing environmental concerns and development.

"It's a gloomy picture," Fulkerson continued. Whether the developer is personally responsible for an environmental problem or not, as a purchaser he can be held liable for contamination already on the site.

Recently, hazardous waste regulations have had the greatest impact on builders, Fulkerson said. Loan approval from lending institutions, for example, may greatly depend on previous uses of the site and evidence of current contamination.

PERHAPS EVEN more frightening, he said, is the chance that contamination will be discovered on a recently purchased site. "Whoever owns the property — even if they're not responsible for the contamination — is liable for cleanup costs."

He added the average price tag for the cleanup of a contaminated site ranges from \$5 million to \$10 million.

Federal environmental protection laws and regulations protect the developer who is innocent of further contaminating the property and who has thoroughly investigated the property to be exempt from repercussions, Fulkerson continued, but the definition of innocent and thorough is interpreted "very narrowly."

Fulkerson said developers must be cautious at every turn. "There are resources out there — hire someone to investigate the property and see what they can find."

Such investigations might include anything from soil samplings to interviews with previous property owners. "You may have to sit heavily on the previous owner to find out what the property's previous uses were."

Tile caulk in colors

By Andy Lang
special writer

(AP)—What's new on the market?

THE PRODUCT — A ceramic tile caulk to match or coordinate with many of today's grout colors and shades.

Manufacturer's claim — That the new color selections include clear, antique white, wheat, sand, tan, powder gray, red wood, black onyx, almond and pure white; that it is mildew-resistant and prevents water seepage around sinks, tubs, vanities, countertop splashguards and tile soap holders; and that it seals surface areas that tend to move slightly, such as where a wall meets a floor or where tiles abut corner and counters.

THE PRODUCT — An epoxy adhesive especially designed for vertical and overhead bonding projects.

Manufacturer's claim — That this epoxy gel bonds quickly through a chemical reaction between the epoxy resin and the hardener; that it will not sag or drip, setting in five minutes; that it bonds wood, metal, fiberglass, china, ceramic, glass and other materials; that, after the adhesive is applied, bonded objects can be handled in 15 minutes, with the epoxy achieving full strength in one hour at room temperature; that it hardens to an opaque finish; that it is available in a dual-syringe container that dispenses equal amounts of the resin and the hardener; and

that its special properties make it ideal for bonding objects to walls, ceilings, under counters and wherever such projects normally are difficult to handle.

THE PRODUCT — A motion sensor light control that reduces the problem of false triggering.

Manufacturer's claim — That false triggering, caused by such things as blowing leaves, will be eliminated by 75 percent; that when the sensor discovers heat in motion, it takes a "second look" to verify the object before it switches the lights on; that the sensor detects people in motion from up to 70 feet away, providing more than 4,500 square feet of coverage; that a multilevel lens provides overlapping detection zones for both downward and outward coverage; that it has a variable shutoff delay to allow the user to adjust the period of time the lights stay on from one to 20 minutes; and that it is UL-listed for wet locations.

The epoxy adhesive is made by Devcon Consumer Division, 780 A.E.C. Drive, Wood Dale, Ill. 60191; the light control by Health-Zenith, Hilltop Road, St. Joseph, Mo. 64508; and the caulk by Darworth Co., Avon, Ct. 06001.

(Do-it-yourselfers will find much valuable material in Andy Lang's handbook, "Practical Home Repairs," which can be obtained by sending \$3 to this paper at P.O. Box 1055, NJ 08725.

Condo board responsible for pool

Our condominium is considering having a "lotto" to raise money for the clubhouse maintenance of the pool because the board is unwilling to budget funds for maintenance as it claims that not enough co-owners are using it. Do you have any comments?

First, I am not sure from your question what type of "lotto" the board is planning to conduct, but it had better make sure that it is not violating any state laws with respect to such "lotto" and that, if necessary, it obtain a license from the state to conduct any type of gaming activity. Secondly, and more important, if the association has a pool which the association members are allowed to

use, the board may well have a fiduciary and legal responsibility to raise funds necessary in order to maintain that pool so as not to deprive any co-owners of its use. You should contact the board to remind them of this responsibility and in the absence of any forthright action by the board, you should consult with an attorney to assist you.

Q: I am being transferred from Birmingham to New York City and wish to buy a co-op in the upper 60s of Manhattan. Do you have any taking as to what the market is in New York and how is a co-op different there from what I might find here with respect to a condominium or townhouse?



condo queries
Robert M. Melsner

A: Coincidentally, I have just had the opportunity to review the co-op market in New York, particularly as it relates to the higher echelon of co-ops surrounding Central Park. The co-op market in New York is weakening, as I understand it, although the price of co-ops in New York comparable to what one would find in Michigan is extremely high. Co-

ops, unlike condominiums, are not regulated by an enabling statute and have a substantial amount of flexibility in regard to who may or may not live in the co-op. A good example, of course, is the Richard Nixon situation in New York where he was denied an opportunity to buy a co-op because he was a lawyer. In a co-op, you rent your unit from the cooperative association, even though you are buying shares in the cooperative association. You sign a proprietary lease and live by the rules and regulations, or they can evict you. I would be very cautious before investing in a co-op in Manhattan because of the apparent fluctuation in market conditions.

Decorating rules meant to be broken

(AP)—The current trend in home design is no fad — it is tradition.

"Tradition is back," said House Beautiful editor JoAnn Barwick, "because we are tired of trendy fads and have swung around again to an appreciation of architecture and furnishings with serenity and balance — the way a home looks when the age-old rules have been followed."

Young people decorating their first homes hunger for rules, according to Barwick. How should they arrange the furniture? Which chairs go with what table? Can they use something unconventional that they've fallen in love with?

Barwick said her magazine went to the masters of home design — past and present — for the following "Golden Rules of Decorating," which range from the classic look to personal style.

John Saladino gave his view of how to create classic design: "To be timeless, we must pursue a few basic details, create an orderly balance. Simply geometric forms the ancients knew — circles, squares, triangles — shape the classics."

Comfort was Billy Baldwin's subject: "Some people confuse luxury with grandeur. To me, comfort is perhaps the ultimate luxury."

Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman Jr. on symmetry: "The desire for symmetry, for balance, for rhythm, is one of the most inveterate of human instincts."

For Elsie de Wolfe, suitability was the subject: "We must learn to recognize suitability, simplicity and proportion, and apply our knowledge to our needs. A huge stuffed leather chair in a tiny gold and cream room is unsuitable."

Dorothy Draper had this to say about color: "There should never be any doubt about what your color has to say. It may be lemon yellow, watermelon pink, chocolate brown or anything you like, just as long as it knows its own mind. Muddy walls are nothing but a blight."

Michael Greer puts passion into his interior designs, saying: "You need one marvelous decorative object which you love outrageously, which you may have spent far more for than you could afford. It can be anything — a painting or a rug or a vase, as well as a piece of furniture."

David Hicks understands the need for warmth. "I may create a very disciplined background, but then I like things messed up or cozied up a little. I am always thinking of warmth."

No matter how many rules you follow, a home must reflect you, as T.J. Robsjohn-Gibbings noted when he said: "Why do we love certain houses, and why do they seem to love us? It is the warmth of our individual hearts reflected in our surroundings."

That brings the amateur decorator back to House Beautiful's advice in giving out these rules: "Just remember: Once learned, rules are also meant to be broken."

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