

Dream

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Forget the cost

The responses from the Observer & Eccentric survey and from similar surveys he's conducted across the country have reinforced a fact McAlexander has long believed:

"Builders and others are always waving the flag of affordability in housing," he said. "But people just don't want what's affordable. And, hey, I am the last person who would reduce somebody's dream into numbers."

Instead, he has put the dreams into a design. The Pinion, the specially-designed Observer & Eccentric-area dream home, is a 2,583-square-foot, single-level, four-bedroom, two-bath design with an isolated master suite and an 886-square-foot garage, all within the respondents budget average of \$203,793 (excluding land costs).

"Ninety percent of your readers wanted extra insulation and 89 percent wanted pantries in the kitchen," McAlexander said. "About 70 percent wanted a basement, a brick exterior, a fireplace, a dining room and a deck."

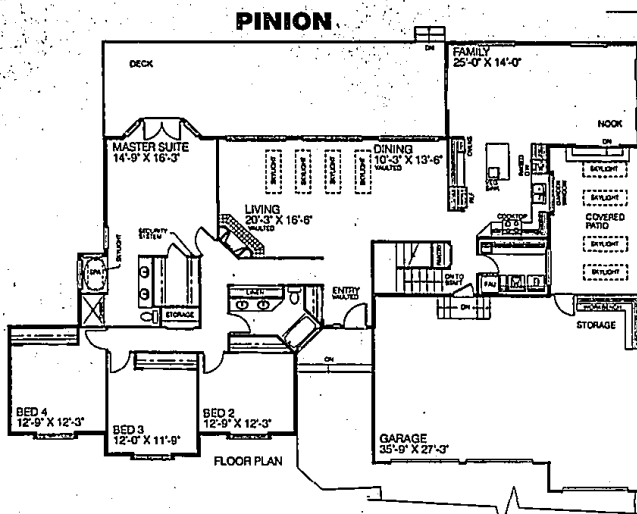
"Few regions in the country expressed such a high level of enthusiasm for brick, basements and fireplaces. But only five percent wanted a wood stove. In some other areas, the numbers tallied up much more evenly, like 40-40 between wood stove and a fireplace."

Bigger the better

McAlexander said that the O&E survey reflected national trends in several areas. "Everybody wants bigger homes," he said. "Of the 32 now plans I'm working on, only two are less than 1,500-square-foot."

The other trends reflect a return to some design concepts popular in the 1950s and early 1960s.

"People want utility rooms inside the house now for their washers and dryers," he said. "They are tired of going up and down stairs all the time. Also pantries are becoming popular again. People realize that these



Dream Home: Here is the floor plan asked for by Observer & Eccentric readers in the annual Dream Home survey. Overall dimensions: 85-feet-6-inches by 63-feet-6-inches; Living space: 2,583 square feet; Garage: 886 square feet.

things make the home more livable."

The Pinion also features an isolated master bedroom suite, another recent design rage.

"I don't know what it is, but people want their master bedroom off by itself," McAlexander said. "Maybe the population is older and they want their teenagers or guests at the other end of the home."

In the Pinion design, McAlexander tried to isolate the master room from the other three bedrooms with a luxurious bathroom and a spacious walk-in closet. The master room features bay windows and French doors that open onto a deck, as well as a double vanity, oversized shower and spa tub with opaque windows and skylighting.

The dream tour

Here's a quick tour of the Pinion home, provided by McAlexander:

Varied roof lines, brick detailing and a gabled entry porch to create a "curb" appeal. Three similar sized and shaped bedrooms cluster together on the left, formal rooms in the center and family living spaces are to the right.

Vaulted ceilings expand the first rooms you see upon stepping inside. The entry, living room and dining room all flow together. Four skylights provide overhead illumination in this large space. Three picture windows, filling most of the back wall, make it doubly bright. A wide tile hearth wraps around a corner fireplace.

The kitchen and adjoining family

room is comfortably large and open. An island with a vegetable sink adds to the available work space, allowing comfortable access to two or more cooks. The garden window looks out across a covered patio illuminated by more skylights. The party, basement stairs and a large utility room with a sink are only a step away.

You can get to the utility room through the three-car garage, which helps out on wet, muddy days or after working in the yard or garage.

So there it is, your dream home. For a study plan of the Pinion (333-110), send \$9 to Landmark Designs, P.O. Box 2307-0E-8, Eugene, OR 97402. Be sure to specify the plan name and number when ordering. For \$20, Landmark offers a collection of its most popular home designs.

Giffels announces promotions

There have been lots of movement within Giffels Associates, Michigan's largest architectural/engineering firm headquartered in Southfield.

Lawrence A. Stein of Farmington Hills was appointed vice president for design services, taking over for Jim Graham who has retired.

John Solowczuk of Birmingham has been named vice president,

overseeing Giffels' quality assurance program and CADD operations.

Philip A. Nicholas of Plymouth has been named vice president in charge of development of new business in the research, electronics and industrial markets.

Ram D. Miera of Troy advanced to vice president and director of Giffels structural engineering department.

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BROKERS WELCOME

New home construction up 6.7 percent in April

(AP) — Builders began digging out of a winter slump in April, boosting construction of new houses and apartments by 6.7 percent, the government said last week.

The biggest increase in housing starts in seven months was shared by every region in the country except the Midwest, where they declined slightly.

Nationally, starts totaled 1.21 million at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, up from 1.14 million in March, the Commerce Department reported. It was the first increase since a 4.5 percent advance last December.

"Naturally, some of it was a rebound from the weather-related slump," said Martin Regalia, economist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "But, more fundamentally, the improvement in mortgage rates and prices combined to create increased affordability."

"Now if we can just sustain these improvements during May and June — the primary building period — we can lay the foundation for the second half of the year," he added.

Thirty-year, fixed-rate mortgages averaged 7.46 percent in April, according to the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp. They had dipped to 7.42 percent during the week ended last Thursday.

However, analysts were watching closely for any sign of change in the Federal Reserve's interest rate policy following recent indications that inflation might be speeding up.

The Fed's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee was meeting behind closed doors Tuesday. In advance of the meeting, analysts said the committee likely would vote to keep policy unchanged.

Although the worrisome inflationary develop-

ments could prevent further rate cuts, these analysts said the weak economy may persuade committee members not to boost rates either.

Wet weather continued to plague housing starts in some parts of the country in April and helped keep the pace of housing construction below December's 1.29 million rate.

"There was really pretty soggy conditions in the Northeast and the Northwest," economist David F. Seiders of the National Association of Home Builders said. "Builders need solid ground to put in foundations."

Still, it was the largest increase since an 11.1 percent gain last August. Analysts had expected starts to advance about 6 percent.

But Seiders said "We will need better numbers than this" to meet the forecasts of many analysts, who are predicting construction of about 1.3 million houses and apartments this year. Builders produced 1.20 million units last year.

In addition to the improvement in actual starts, economist David Lereah of the Mortgage Bankers Association noted that applications for building permits — a harbinger of activity to come — also rose in April.

Permits were up 5.8 percent, to a 1.09 million rate, the largest increase since a 7.8 percent advance in December 1991.

"That combination is encouraging for future housing activity," he said.

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drapes, painting on the wall or architecture. Really stop and decide what you do like.

"There's a lot of architecture being built in this state I think is horrendous," Bryce said. "People are buying because of the work of interior designers — wall coverings, furnishings, accessorizing."

Bryce's partner, Carl Palaszczko, designed two models built by Arbor Development for this year's show.

Homearama is a great way for lookers to get a handle on what's in the market at what price, said Robert Pollock, a West Bloomfield resident and chairman of Arbor Development.

"I think you have to stand back, look at the plan book and concentrate on what you're interested in," he said. "When you walk through, you should study plans, jot down notes, ask questions."

"We typically find that people want to see every house," Lamb said. "They may pick up a floor plan idea they like or a closet tucked away. They can always pick up an idea."

"We find through exit polls that 25 percent who go through Homearama do plan to buy another house in the next 12 months."

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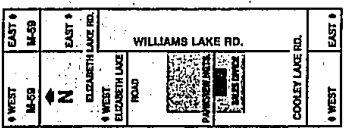
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Mike's Likes

Mike Peters talks about his family's new home in Canton, the park next door, Plymouth-Canton schools and other neat things:

On Location: Living at Meadowbrook is great! Mom's got lots of shopping places to go and Dad's so close to work, we have more time to play catch.

On Features: Meadowbrook homes have lots of big bedrooms and bathrooms, which is important when you've got 3 sisters like mine. And none of the garages face the street which looks really neat, plus there's plenty of space for my bike. My Mom really loves the Island Kitchen with its built-in desk, and big breakfast nook — she says it "gives us quality time together."

On Price: Mom and Dad saved enough to buy the ultimate home of our dreams right now. And with today's low interest rates, Dad said we're saving a bundle every month. Hey, I think I'll ask for a bigger allowance!

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