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Attitude adjustments

But designing a house in Florida is a lot different from designing a house in Michigan.

"They, the community, wanted Mediterranean — it's very popular there," Wine said. The result is a mix of contemporary- and Mediterranean-style architecture. "We're trying to carry the flavor, the openness of contemporary, while maintaining the feeling of the Mediterranean style."

Working in a less familiar style requires a great deal of research, he said.

"A lot of the large homes in California and Florida built for the wealthy are Mediterranean-style."

While he can look up references to Mediterranean-style architecture in books, it's not the same as studying actual examples. "There aren't many Mediterranean-style homes in Bloomfield Hills."

Bonnie J. Wine said the couple traveled to Florida several times to research and tour the classic

Mediterranean-style houses.

"There was an excitement on our part to do this," she said.

Updating the old

Having never worked out of state or in the Mediterranean-style, the Wines saw an opportunity to take on a new challenge. "We went down to Florida and got to do a lot of looking around at what Mediterranean-style really is," Bonnie Wine said.

"While they are quite wonderful, they aren't as suited to today's lifestyles."

"The typical Mediterranean-style home is a bit more ornate and formal," she said. "Our clients wanted a home with a lot of the contemporary features they've come to enjoy in their home here." Robert Wine said the distance and licensing requirements also necessitated the need for a design partner, an architect schooled in the particular requirements of a Florida house.

"We do the complete design package; we use his (Florida ar-

chitect John Schlitt's) engineering and structural expertise and people."

Wine said his designs were basically complete, but he would send the final drawings for modifications. "A typical Michigan house isn't required to withstand 140 miles-per-hour hurricane winds."

In one way, it would have been more difficult if his client had hired an architect in Florida, Wine said. After all, his client lives in Michigan, and the architect has to work very closely with a client in order to get the design done correctly.

Sea of red tape

Long distance design is also different because of the demands placed on design by locals.

"There are different requirements in different parts of the country," Robert Wine said.

Builders and architects can often be heard commenting on the voluminous regulations imposed by communities; and each com-

munity is different.

If you think the difference between building in West Bloomfield and Livonia is significant, try southeastern Michigan and Florida.

By way of example, Florida has what are called "turtle ordinances." The turtle ordinance, Wine said, prohibits placement of exterior lighting and interior lighting that shines into the ocean.

That's because the light confuses turtles, which, upon seeing the lights, come up on shore and lay their eggs out of season. As a result, infant turtles don't hatch.

Of course, not all Florida ordinances are as exotic as this, but it proves the point that there are subtle as well as obvious differences.

Many of the differences are fairly mundane, Wine said, governing things such as materials and building methods — often necessitated by the Florida climate. "You wouldn't want to use exposed steel (which is used freely

in contemporary architecture) in Florida because it would begin rusting away immediately."

At the same time, the climate also opened up opportunities.

"There is some advantage to using the real materials." The extensive use of stucco, common in Mediterranean-style architecture, isn't possible in Michigan where the freeze-thaw cycle would quickly destroy it.

Trust is the key

John Grissam, president of landscape design firm of John Grissam Associates in Farmington Hills and the landscape architect for the Florida house, said — and Wine agreed — that the most difficult part of designing a project long distance is finding and working with the right people.

"There is a concern that when you work out of state, that things won't be done exactly as you designed it," Grissam said. Since he is in Michigan, and the project isn't, he can't be there every day to make sure things are progressing as well as intended.

Builders fret less about lumber

A clue that lumber prices have stabilized across the country: Seventy percent of builders nationwide said that workers' compensation was the most critical issue they faced, according to a survey by the National Association of Home Builders.

Increasing lumber prices, which had topped the list for most of the last two years, was No. 2 on the builders' top 10 critical issues list at 68 percent.

The rest of the top 10: OSHA inspections (63 percent), storm-water management and permits (43), wetlands (43), impact fees and development exactions (41), endangered species (36), growth/no growth attitudes (34 percent), development approval process (33) and mandated health insurance legislation (32).

Fourty-six percent of the builders listed solid waste as the No. 1 emerging issue.

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