

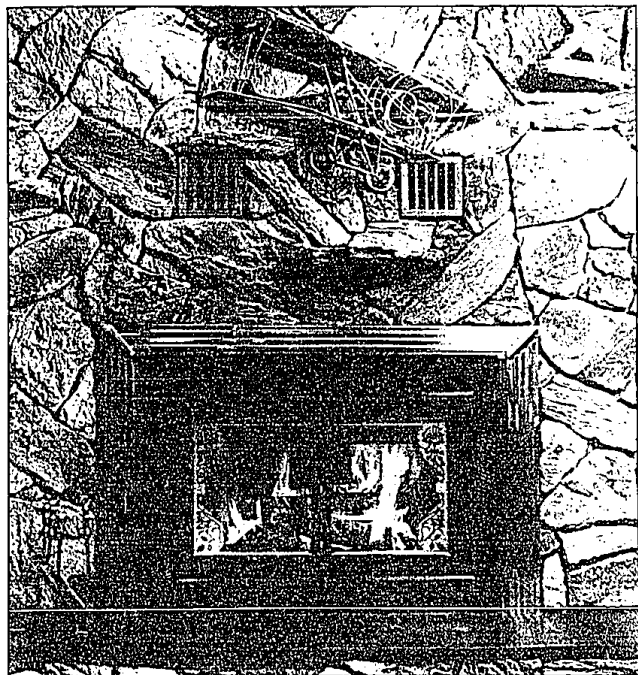
Building Scene

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300



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Fireplaces and facades come in a variety of styles from the very simple to the fancy. This model, a pre-fab fireplace surrounded by man-

Masonry or pre-fab, fireplaces standard feature in new homes

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Fire once served as the primary cooking, heating and lighting source in caves of prehistoric times.

The harnessing of electricity and natural gas, plus the evolution of appliances like furnaces and ranges have considerably lessened our dependence on fire. Yet, the fascination continues.

Fireplaces, even those which don't necessarily have energy-efficient features, apparently have become standard equipment in new houses and condominiums in metro Detroit.

"In all six of our projects going on now and two starting the first of the year, I believe every single home at every single level — from \$150,000 to \$400,000 — every home has a fireplace," said Ellen Whitefield, director of sales and marketing for The Selective Group of Farmington Hills.

Deen Hyde, marketing director for Pulte Homes of Michigan in Royal Oak, told a similar story.

"WE HAVE a fireplace as a standard feature in all of our houses and condos and in several plans we have a second fireplace in the master bedroom as an option," Hyde said. "It's just something our customers totally expect."

Kathy Reid, marketing director for the Holtzman & Silverman Cos. of Farmington Hills, sang the same basic tune.

"In condominium communities, a fireplace is standard. People have come to expect it," she said. Upwards of 50 percent of buyers at the builder's Ford Lake Heights in Ypsilanti have selected a fireplace as an option, Reid said.

Rob Matlyow, manager of Atlas Veneers & Fireplaces in Troy, leaves no doubt about their popularity.

"EVERYBODY who builds today puts a fireplace in," he said. Warmth or use as a secondary heating source isn't the major reason people crave fireplaces nowadays.

At best, the most energy efficient fireplaces, provide a light heat supplement, said Steven Brown, vice president of Federal Fireplace & Barbecue of Southfield.

"Most customers could care less about efficiency," he said. "They care about aesthetics. It's the focal point of the room."

"People in the modern age don't have fires for heat. Most will only use it six times a year. People have fires for aesthetics, coziness and romance," Brown said.

"Newer homes are so efficient as it is, newer efficiencies you might get from a fireplace aren't worth the effort," he said.

Knowing that, builders generally don't bother with things like blowers as standard equipment, Brown added.

THE TREND is toward pre-fabricated rather than masonry fireplaces. The metal chamber of a pre-fab fireplace doesn't need a foundation. A brick fireplace does.

Installation of a pre-fab is less expensive than masonry by about 50 percent, Brown said.

"Pre-fabs are getting cheaper and masons are getting more expensive," he said.

A pre-fab, engineered for precision fit, is more efficient by its very nature.

Fireplace options like a damper control, an outside air source, blowers, and glass doors

don't necessarily cost an arm and a leg — can save energy dollars, Matlyow said.

He pegged the total cost of an energy-saving package at about \$600. But many buyers believe that features like air ducts, blowers and doors detract from appearance, Brown said.

AND BECAUSE the fireplace is one of the last items people building their own homes deal with and they're usually over budget by then, that's where they scrimp, Matlyow said.

Pulte installs pre-fab fireplaces manufactured by Heatillator and Majestic in its developments. Holtzman and Silverman uses brands made by Superior.

The Selective Group puts in pre-fab fireplaces manufactured by Superior but also some masonry fireplaces. The pre-fabs are more likely to be found in condos, masonries in pricier detached houses, Whitefield said.

Design factors considered by architects for the masonry layouts include basic floor plan, window placement and possible furniture layout, she said.

MORE CONSUMERS are starting to use gas rather than wood as a fuel in their fireplaces, retailers say, although wood still has the edge.

Gas not only burns cleaner, but it's

'We have a fireplace as a standard feature in all of our houses and condos, and in several plans we have a second fireplace in the master bedroom as an option.'

— Deen Hyde
Pulte Homes

easier to deal with than wood and it's cheaper. Fuel in a gas fireplace generally costs about 23 cents per hour, Brown said. Wood costs two or three times as much.

There's also a concern that burning wood could be limited by federal clean air laws in the future, he added.

Pre-fab fireplaces also allow more decorative options for the facade than brick.

Brown said he's seen all kinds of wild designs on modern fireplace facades including mirrors and neon lights. "The sky's the limit," he said.

But traditional styles seem to be the norm for most people.

That means marble and a wood mantle for a formal living room or a great room and some other kind of stone or veneer for a rec room.

Manufactured home sales rise

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Shipment of manufactured houses to Michigan continues to increase, according to industry figures, and that suits Steven Adler just fine.

Adler, 39, of West Bloomfield, is director of operations for Unipro, a Birmingham real estate equity investment firm, and a member of the Michigan Mobile Home Commission.

"What the industry has become is affordable housing," Adler said. "Ninety-five percent of all manufactured homes sold in the country are under \$40,000."

People who buy manufactured housing — units which are produced in factories then assembled at building sites — pay monthly rent on the land in residential parks where their houses are set up.

Some 7,900 manufactured homes were shipped to Michigan through September compared to 7,600 for the same nine-month period last year, reported the Manufactured Housing Institute.

Shipments in state totaled 10,334 in 1988, 9,915 in 1987. Mobile homes are classified as manufactured housing.

AS A BUSINESSMAN, Adler is interested in profits. As an appointed member to a state monitoring commission, he's concerned about construction standards and management of manufactured housing communities.

Both roles serve a similar end, Adler said.

"We recognize the customer, people who live in our communities, makes our business go," he said.

Unipro manages 40 residential communities in 12 states containing some 15,000 units. Only one, Old Dutch Farms in Novi, is in suburban Detroit.



Steven Adler promotes manufactured houses.

The manufactured housing industry has come a long way, and buyers, especially in Michigan, are looking at that option, Adler said.

Economics is a big reason. Manufactured homes can be built for about \$20 per square foot, Adler said, compared to \$75-100 for custom-built, on-site construction.

PROPERTY TAXES, except for a \$3 monthly fee, aren't assessed on manufactured housing in residential parks designed for such housing.

And because the cost of a lot isn't factored into the downpayment — remember, most buyers of manufactured housing rent their land — the downpayment and closing costs aren't as high as for site-built buyers.

Monthly rents at Old Dutch Farms range from \$250 to \$260 per month, Adler said.

Quality construction and conditions in residential parks also are on the upswing, Adler said.

"Homes built now are built to building code," he said. "They're built to conventional design. The evolutionary process from trailer to manufactured home sometimes gets obscured."

"COMMUNITIES originally were placed on dirt roads," Adler elaborated. They weren't very attractive. There were no amenities.

"Our streets are all paved with curbs and gutters, recreation facilities, all underground utilities, landscaped with playgrounds," he said. "The quality of community we put these homes in have all changed."

Adler was appointed to the Mobile Home Commission in 1988 to represent operators of manufactured housing communities with 10 or more sites. He replaced Paul Zlotoff, Unipro's chief executive officer.

"We look at licensing of dealerships . . . regulation of the mobile Home Act as it affects residents," Adler said.

"What I see the commission doing is serving as a sounding board for the consumer/resident-operator relationship. We're looking after that industry. If the consumer isn't happy with the industry, it won't grow and flourish," he said.

THE COMMISSION also monitors construction standards and reviews site plans.

The gap between site-built homes and manufactured housing is narrowing.

In 1977, 41,940 site-built houses were constructed throughout the state and 8,066 manufactured houses were shipped here, according to the Michigan Manufactured Housing Association.

Corresponding figures for 1987 were 25,205 site-built houses, 9,915 manufactured homes.

— houses built in a factory then assembled at building sites — of at least a couple of hundred units.

Unlike traditional manufactured housing communities, people who buy into the joint venture project would own the land as well as their house, Adler said.

Several builders have cited a need for affordable new housing for a young generation of buyers.

"We really believe that starter housing affordability is going to be a crisis in the 1990s," said Mitchell Horowitz, president of The Selective Group. "What we're doing is looking at ways to address the issue."

UNIPROP, founded in 1971, buys existing manufactured housing communities rather than develop from scratch.

The Selective Group, founded in 1983, builds houses and condominiums priced from \$170,000-400,000.

Obtaining the right piece of property is the key to a successful joint venture, said Terry Nosan, a vice president for Nosan/Cohen.

Nosan identified that kind of parcel as "a property in a city or township in that it has some commitment to affordable housing, that's zoned for multiple or high-density, single-family usage."

Proceed cautiously with 'site' condos

Our family attorney has told us that there is something new called a site condominium that allows us to build single-family detached units without having to get approval from various governmental agencies and otherwise complying with the Subdivision Control Act.

Site condominiums are the hot thing. The Attorney General has, in essence, sanctioned their continued use and development. But the attorney general's opinion is not akin to a court decision. This matter may well be brought to a test in the near future. Various municipalities are in the process of adopting site condominium ordinances that, in some cases, place tight limitations on the type of condominium development that can be developed.

You should obviously attempt to comply with all incidents of the condominium statute in developing your condominium, notwithstanding the fact that some of the attributes of the project may make it appear as if it is a typical subdivision. You should also try to get a legal opinion as to the propriety of the site condominium before you start and try to ascertain whether there will be any problems with the municipality in question.

I recently discovered that the control timer and shut-off valves for the sprinkler system were in the basement of my condominium.

condo queries
Robert M. Melsner

and connected to my electricity. The owner of the complex and the condominium association refuse to remove it or pay me for the electricity. Could you advise me of my rights?

Check the master deed and disclosure statement to see if there was any disclosure concerning the location of the valves and timer. Also check the subdivision plan to see if the utility plan has any reference to the sprinkler system and shut-off valves in your unit. Assuming there is not representation that such valves or connection would be in your unit, I believe you have recourse against the association or the developer for the damages sustained by you.

Robert M. Melsner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate and corporate law. You are invited to submit topics for this column by writing Robert M. Melsner, 29200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Birmingham 48010. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

Kameraman involved in hair salon project

When Kennice Hoffman and Bashar Kallabat set about realizing their dream hair salon in Farmington Hills, they drew on the design expertise of Rachel Kameraman of R. Kameraman Design of Southfield to actualize their concept.

Kameraman's participation in the project was inadvertently left out of last week's story on Salon Kennice Bashar.

Kameraman, a Michigan native who has worked for the International design firm, American Designers in New York City and locally for Petrusarea of Birmingham and John Greenberg and Associates in Berkley, cites her specialty in retail and hospitality decor for the shop.

"The overall ambience is quite dramatic, but it's the small details that make it complete,"

Kameraman said. Directing Guiding craftsman in the installation of faux marble and other finishes, Kameraman also guided the selections for wall drapery and paint color and textures to produce both the classical and the ultra-modern displayed in the shop.

A stickler for detail, Kameraman donned old clothes to sponge paint bathroom walls with paint mixed by her and Hoffman. The pair also hunted antique sales for the right decorating touches including a mirror sporting a castle in its frame.

Yet to come are frosted glass and black metal entry doors and custom metal signs with matte brass, oxidized metals and matte relief lettering. Such touches are part of Kameraman's "completed look" she chooses for her jobs.

Joint venture would blend approaches

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Unipro of Birmingham and The Selective Group, a Farmington Hills developer/builder of residential housing, are talking about a joint venture constructing new houses priced at less than \$100,000 in the Detroit area.

Steven Adler, operations director at Unipro, said he believes that a joint venture between developers of manufactured housing, like his company, and on-site construction, like The Selective Group, would be a first for metro Detroit.

Both sides were mum about

specifics. No formal agreement has been reached, and no plans have been finalized, they said. Talks apparently have been under way for a couple of months; an announcement on a specific project is expected in January.

Unipro also has talked with three other developers/builders, including Nosan/Cohen Associates of West Bloomfield, about the possibility of a joint venture, Adler said.

Those builders are still in the picture, he added.

"It's not done until it's done in this business," Adler said.

ADLER ENVISIONS an all-manufactured housing communi-