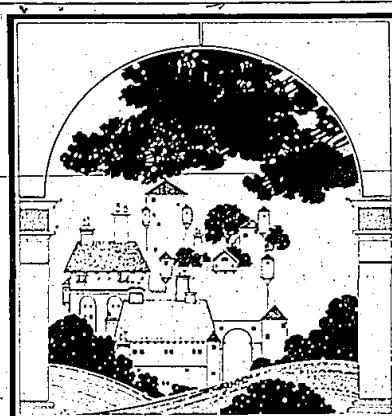
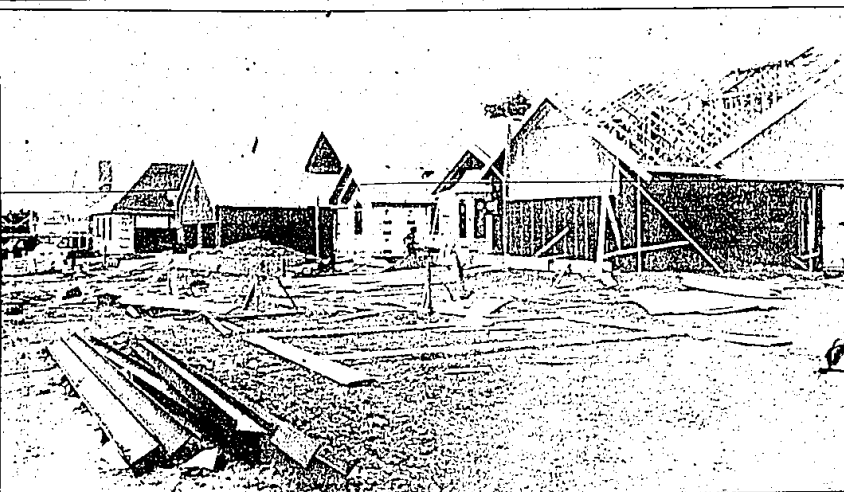


Building Scene

Marilyn Fitchett editor/953-2102



O&E Thursday, January 2, 1992



Survey seeks dream home specifications

If house designers would just ask me, you may have thought, I could tell them what people really want in a house.

Well, here's your chance. Landmark Designs, in partnership with Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, is asking you to tell them exactly what features and amenities you would include in your dream house. Now in its 15th year of designing houses and writing a house design column, Landmark Designs has learned that readers can always teach them a thing or two. Or more.

WHETHER YOU plan to build a house, filling out the form can help clarify your preferences. And it's an opportunity to let your imagination soar. Landmark Designs has provided the accompanying survey form that includes the same questions architects, designers and real estate agents ask to determine clients' wants and needs in the country. Readers are encouraged to attach letters, sketches or other comments — the more detailed, the better.

Once the nationwide results of the survey are tallied, Landmark will design a national dream house. And because regional preferences vary widely, Landmark will design a house to meet the specifications preferred by Observer & Eccentric readers.

FLOORPLANS AND artist's renderings of the dream houses will appear on these pages in the spring.

Following publication of these plans, Landmark will provide a free set of working drawings to the first person who is willing to build one of the dream houses and open it to public display for a limited time.

Mail forms to Landmark Designs, Dept. 92, P.O. Box 2307, Eugene, OR 97402. There is no charge to participate in the survey. But those interested in receiving a copy of the national survey results must include \$4 to cover the cost of postage and printing. Those persons must include their name and mailing address.

1992 DREAM HOME SURVEY

GENERAL INFORMATION

| | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| TYPE OF HOME | One Story | Two Story | Split Level | Basement |
| Size of home | 1001 to 1500 | 1501 to 2000 | 2001 to 2500 | 2501 to 3500 |
| Budget for home (land excluded) | \$ | | | |
| Location | Standard Lot | Acreage | Other | |
| Exterior style | Contemporary | Countryside | Spanish | French |
| Exterior material | Brick | Stone | Wood | Stucco |
| Garage | Number of cars | Shop | Storage | RV Parking |
| LIVING AREAS | In addition to kitchen and living area I would like the following rooms in my home: | | | |
| Formal Entry | Formal Dining | Recreation | Family Room | |
| Media Room | Exercise | Office | Den | |
| Guest Suite | Library | Utility | Breakfast | |
| Number of Bedrooms | Number of Baths | | | |
| Other rooms | | | | |
| KITCHEN FEATURES | Style and Shape | | | |
| Country | U-shaped | Walk In | Other | |
| Amenities (in addition to standard appliances) | Breakfast nook | Bar | Recycling Center | |
| Appliances | Island | Double Oven | Trash Compactor | |
| Garden Window | Freezer | Gill | Other | |
| MASTER SUITE FEATURES | Isolated from GR. Adjacent to other bedrooms. | | | |
| Private bath with the following features | Bath | Shower | Over-sized Tub | |
| Tub/Shower comb | Bath | Shower | Over-sized Tub | |
| Tub/Shower comb | Bath | Shower | Over-sized Tub | |
| Two wash basins | Bath | Shower | Over-sized Tub | |
| SPECIAL REQUESTS | Fireplace | | | |
| Computer Center | Deck/Patio | Spa | Indoor Swim Pool | |
| Vaulted Ceilings | Skylights | Other | Security System | |
| I would conserve energy by taking advantage of | Minimized Windows | Passive solar | Active solar | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | Number in Household | | | |
| Do you own a home? | Yes | No | Are you going to build a home? | Yes |
| Mail completed survey to | LANDMARK DESIGNS, INC. | | | |
| | Department 92 | | | |
| | P.O. Box 2307 | | | |
| | Eugene, OR 97402 | | | |

Legislative regulations that influence builders rank highly in their list of concerns, but financial matters also continue to rank highly. They range from construction financing and worker compensation costs to development costs and infrastructure financing.

Builders look at critical issues

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Although no growth/slow growth and wetland and environmental issues still rank among the top concerns of builders nationwide, the cost of doing business is beginning to take precedence.

Or at least that's the result of the most recent survey of builders in the National Association of Home Builders.

Each year, the association surveys its members to find out which issues are of critical importance to the building industry and also to determine which are new or emerging issues, according to Jay Shackford, NAHB president of public affairs.

AMONG CRITICAL issues there were few surprises, he said. Impediments to building and development, particularly wetlands and growth/no growth attitudes, continued to rank highly.

As has been the case for the past several years, wetlands — the right to develop or not to develop them — ranked first in the survey, Shackford said. "Wetlands have been an issue for years — and they promise to remain an issue."

"Builders continue to view wetlands laws as an unlawful taking of property because they deprive builders of the right to do with their land as they see fit."

Growth/no growth pressures, another perennial top 10 inhibitor, ranked fifth overall, after ranking eighth last year, he said.

ALTHOUGH ISSUES like these are problems for builders, there are other issues that affect builders and all businesses, Shackford said.

"Financial concerns continue to rank highly," he said. Concerns ranging from construction financing and

TOP 10 CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Wetlands (1)
2. Construction financing (2)
3. Workers' compensation (3)
4. Development costs (5)
5. Growth/no growth attitudes (8)
6. Affordable housing (6)
7. Stormwater management permits (9)
8. Development Approval Process (10)
9. Impact fees/development fees (7)
10. General infrastructure financing (4)

worker compensation costs to development costs and infrastructure financing also returned to the top ten.

Construction financing, the ability to get loans and spend efficiently for the actual construction work, returned as the second most critical issue for builders on a national scale, he said. Worker compensation costs, money spent on workers who are injured or otherwise unable to work, ranked third just as it did last year.

Development costs, the money developers spend to turn vacant fields into land with potential for building moved up from fourth to fifth on the top 10 critical issues list.

Infrastructure financing, an issue builders are interested in not only because the adequacy of infrastructure determines where they can build but also because it is a cost builder, dropped from fourth to 10th on the list.

BUILDERS ARE also concerned with issues that are legislative in nature, Shackford said. Stormwater management and its permitting process, which is frequently used to block development or at least slow it down, and the development approval process, which has become increasingly more localized and diverse, continued to trouble builders, he said.

Stormwater management and its permitting process moved from ninth to seventh on the list; development approval moved from 10 to eighth.

A final issue, which has become increasingly important to builders in recent years and really encompasses all of the above issues in one way or another, is affordable housing, Shackford said.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING, which remains as the sixth most critical issue, is particularly important in southeast Michigan where local builders have been expressing concerns that the average person is being priced out of the dream of owning a house.

Michigan builders are much like their national counterparts — environmental pressures, legislative issues and everyday cost of business makes doing what they do increasingly more difficult.

Thomas Caterino, newly elected president of Michigan Association of Home Builders, said while wetlands and growth/no growth attitudes affect a builder depends on where the builder is working.

MAHB also keeps a semi-annual list of critical issues, Caterino said. Issues like growth management, the small business tax, infrastructure financing and the state's Plat Act are all of great concern to builders, but the top issue is wetlands.

Caterino said in more developed areas like southeastern Michigan, builders are concerned that wetlands are being used as a tool to stymie development; in rural areas, there is simply no adequate definition of what a wetland is and is not.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

prohibiting local wetlands ordinances is being watched closely by builders, he said. "Now, there is no consistency (from community to community)."

A direct result of each community having its own rules governing developing in and around wetlands is that developers frequently don't know what to do and can make costly mistakes (for themselves, future homeowners and the wetlands themselves), he said.

Many local wetlands rules "go far beyond what was intended when the idea of protecting wetlands was proposed," Caterino said. Even without local control, Michigan wetland laws are some of the strictest in the country — stricter than even federal regulations.

"EVEN IN the fairest interpretation of wetlands, people are getting hurt by this — and not just developers, but whoever happens to be standing when the music stops," Caterino said.

Developers, farmers, and people who have land for investment and retirement purposes are essentially being deprived of their property rights, he said. "What we would like to see happen is that the politics get taken out of the process."

As for more rural areas — where wetlands are governed by state law — Caterino said the problem is not politics so much as bureaucracy. Most developers feel the definition of a wetland changes depending on whose desk the permit application lands.

Builders have long been concerned about Goemaere-Anderson Act — the law that restricts development in and around wetlands — and its ambiguities and have lobbied for clear rules, definitions and procedures.

Builders' glimpse of the future

While many of the critical issues remain the same and return to the list year after year, emerging issues give the national association an inkling of what may happen in the near future, said Jay Shackford, vice president of public affairs for the national association of homebuilders.

As in the case of the critical list, environmental concerns rank highly in emerging issues list, he said.

"Solid waste, from construction waste disposal, to the ability of disposing of household waste once a project is complete, to the difficult task of siting landfills and incinerators has ranked as the top emerging issue for several years," he said.

Groundwater protection, which ranked second last year, dropped to fourth this year, Shackford said.

Closely associated with groundwater protection is the availability of sewer and water capacity, he said.

In recent years, municipal infrastructure improvement has slowed significantly.

"That means builders are being asked to provide things once paid for

TOP 10 EMERGING ISSUES

1. Solid waste (1)
2. Increasing lumber prices (2)
3. Labor availability and quality (3)
4. Groundwater protection (2)
5. OSHA inspections (5)
6. Safety and health legislation (7)
7. Property taxes (4)
8. Real estate transfer taxes (6)
9. Availability of sewers and water (10)
10. Codes regulation (5)

by the government — builders pass those costs on to the buyers, which means higher housing costs."

The option is to either build where existing infrastructure exists — often in places where people don't want to buy, or building water and sewage facilities or systems for each project that is again very expensive, he said.

SEVERAL EMERGING issues revolve around the ability of builders to compete and do business.

One issue is the availability and quality of labor.

"Power young people are choosing the trades as a career. Without tradesmen like carpenters, electricians and plumbers, there won't be any place to build houses."

Closely related to this are the Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspections and safety and health legislation. As builders are forced to follow more regulations,

projects require more time, and therefore, cost more money — all of which is passed onto the buyers, he said.

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE on the

emerging issues list is the appearance of increasing lumber prices as the number two emerging issue. Lumber prices have increased dramatically in the last year as once productive forest acreage is being removed from government harvest programs — often in response to environmental pressures to preserve natural and old forest stands.

Coupled with the removal of tree harvesting has been the recession and slowdown in the building industry, he said.

As the recession began, fewer people were buying houses, as fewer people bought houses, many of the lumber mills slowed production or shut down altogether. When demand began to rise again, lumber was in short supply, and production has yet to catch up, Shackford said.

Some builders have even gone as far as to accuse the lumber industry — from lumber barons, to mills, to wholesalers — of taking advantage of the situation and price gouging, he said.