

New Homes

The Farmington Observer

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Sunday, September 28, 1997

Firm identifies eco-risks

Before you close the deal on your new home, you may want to find out whether there are any abandoned dumps, landfills or other eco-hazards that may affect its value or put the health of your family at risk.

Homes near an environmental hazard can be sold at a price that may not hold true if the buyer knew of the near-by problem. Although information on environmental hazards is public, most people are totally unaware of these sites. Even people who live very close to these sites are often unaware of them.

Sellers may not disclose that an eco-hazard is near the house they are trying to sell. Such a seller can pass along a house that is not worth as much as the uninformed buyer thinks it is.

The result is the buyer may never be able to resell the property for what he paid. That's a loss of money on the largest investment of his life because he failed to look into or make his Realtor aware of his concern with the environmental health and safety of a new home.

A home buyer recently told me his mortgage company would not risk money on a home that was affected by a hazardous waste site. The mortgage company finds out about such problems from its appraiser. But the appraiser almost always states in the appraisal that he is not qualified to comment on environmental issues and that these issues are beyond the scope of the appraisal.

Even in the rare case where the appraiser fills out an environmental

Please see RISKS, G2

Van Buren Twp. delivers good value

There's a lot to tout about the Homestead, a single-family site-condominium community in Van Buren Township.

The builder and sales representatives mention the three-car garage and 80-foot-wide lots offered as standard features to buyers.

The talk about the location — sort of off the beaten path on Ecorse Road, yet with easy access to I-276, I-94 and points north, south, east and west.

They bring up quality construction at a good price.

The Homestead, a collaborative effort between S.R. Jacobson Development and Key Homes, features 267 lots, 51 in the initial phase.

"We're very excited," said Scott Jacobson. "We're offering something that hasn't been offered at this price point: three-car garage."

"The location, we think, is superb," he added. "It's a new area close to the airport. The school system (Van Buren) is good. It's getting much better."

"We saw growth in Canton, but the land for more-affordable product wasn't available. We saw this as the next growth area," Jacobson said.

"Bottom line is you're getting a lot of value here," said Cathie Ferdon, project sales manager.

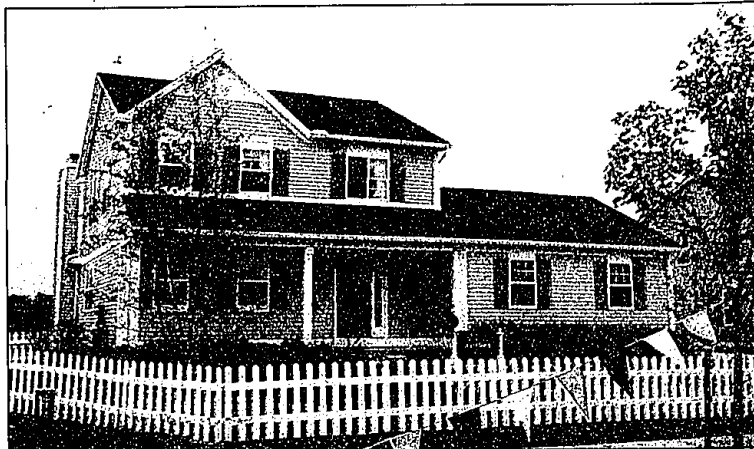
"What brings a lot of people in is the name S.R. Jacobson," she said. "People have heard of the name and think quality product. They can rely on the company to build their dream home."

"We follow the same construction practices whether we build a \$150,000 house or a \$400,000 house," said Colette Scholten, sales and marketing director for Jacobson.

Six floor plans are available at the Homestead.

They range in price from \$169,500 for a ranch of 1,284 square feet with three bedrooms and two baths to \$188,500 for a Cape Cod of 1,850 square feet with three bedrooms and 2-1/2 baths.

Buyers may also choose among two-story and bi-level plans.



Expandable house: Buyers of the Hartford model at the Homestead make several decisions on how exactly the floor plan will look.

An oven and dishwasher, three-car garage, fireplace and basement are included in all plans at base price except the bi-level, which has an unfinished lower level. Some plans include a first-floor laundry at base price; others don't.

Two models were finished, a third under construction during a recent visit.

The Newhampton, the largest, is a two story of 2,142 square feet.

The main living area features a living room, dining room, kitchen/ nook, family room, laundry and half bath.

Four bedrooms are upstairs. The

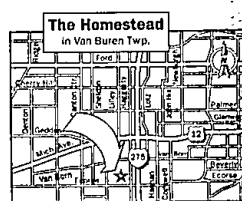
master has a walk-in closet, shower and two-sink vanity. A second bath with a combination tub/shower service the other bedrooms.

Base price is \$185,500. The model, with two-car garage and upgrades excluding landscaping is about \$196,800.

"This gives a real family feeling," Ferdon said of the plan. "Everything flows through. Cabinets and the pantry, I think, are important. Families really like that."

The Hartford model, described by

Please see VALUE, G2



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