

Manufactured and Modular vs. 'Stick-Built' Homes: Here Are My Thoughts

There has been some confusion in the real estate world over the term "manufactured" homes. Most recently the term has been applied to mobile homes — also referred to as single-wide or double-wide homes, which are transported fully finished to mobile home parks.

But "manufactured," as I understand it, can be applied to a home whose walls, trusses and other components are put together in a warehouse, then shipped on flatbed trailers to a construction site where they are assembled and installed on a standard concrete foundation.

A "modular" home goes a step further, in that entire rooms might be assembled in a warehouse, transported to a work site and then assembled with other modules to make a complete house.

The first home I bought in Colorado was a ranch with walk-out basement in Golden's Mesa Meadows subdivision. Only after I had moved in did a neighbor share with me how my home was put together in a day or two. Its components were manufactured in Fort Morgan and delivered to Golden only after the concrete foundation was ready to receive them. Anyone looking at the home would think it was a "stick-built" home like the other homes in the neighborhood. When I bought it and when I later sold it, it wasn't listed on the MLS as "man-

ufactured," because that would have felt like a misrepresentation, given the type of home it was.

The neighbor who explained that my home was actually built in Fort Morgan and assembled on site, explained how that process made for a better home. The exterior walls were 2x6 construction (to withstand the rigors of shipment) and they were fully insulated on the factory floor rather than on-site, resulting in better quality control. It made sense to me. It also made me wonder why more homes aren't built that way.

I remember learning that an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity in Minnesota or Wisconsin constructs homes that way during the cold winter months — having volunteers assemble entire wall units in heated warehouses during cold spells, then delivering them to the site later on.

Every conventionally built home uses roof trusses that are made to order on factory floors and shipped to work sites on flatbed trailers, so why not have wall units made to order as well?

From 1933 to 1940 Sears Roebuck sold mail-order "Kit Homes" that were "pre-cut and fitted." A 2-story colonial-style home called the "Martha Washington" was sold by Sears for \$3,727. Other kit homes had names like the Cape Cod, the Ridgeland, the Franklin, the Dayton, and the Collingwood. See above right for that model's description from the Sears catalog. Many homes in Denver were built from Sears kits, but you'd never know it. Original owners of those homes are long gone, and the current owners of them probably have no idea.

There are definite economies to building homes that are "pre-cut" and partially pre-assembled off-site. For one thing, the factory workers can work every day regardless of the weather and even in multiple shifts. They can be more productive in a heated warehouse. There will be more efficient use of materials and more recycling and reuse as well.

Right now, the growing "tiny home" market is doing such construction and delivering modules or even entire homes to work sites, enjoying great economies in doing

so. There is no reason that more elements of larger homes couldn't be built off-site and delivered to construction sites for final assembly.

One example of off-site modular construction utilized in the building of sustainable homes is Structural



Insulated Panels or "SIPs," shown at left. Two sheets of sheathing have 4 to 5 inches of

foam insulation between them. SIPs can replace walls built with wood framing and provide superior insulation.

Impresa Modular is a West Virginia company with a great website (www.ImpresaModular.com) describing the many kinds of off-site home construction methodologies they employ and sell.

There is so much innovation happening in home construction, much

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Modern Homes Division

of which can not only reduce construction costs but can result in better insulated homes.

Benefit From Knowing the 'Realtor Advantage'

As you probably know, not all licensed real estate agents are "Realtors." To be a Realtor, one has to be a dues-paying member of a local Realtor association, which automatically makes the agent a member of the state Realtor association and the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

Many low-producing real estate agents don't want to cough up roughly \$500 per year in Realtor dues, so they join a non-Realtor brokerage like HomeSmart Realty in Greenwood Village or Trelora Colorado in downtown Denver. Agents with those firms can't call themselves "Realtors."

You've probably seen TV commercials by NAR saying "Make sure your agent is a Realtor." Their current campaign features the theme, "That's Who We R." Both campaigns stress the point that only Realtors subscribe to the Realtor Code of Ethics. There is no code of ethics for non-Realtors.

In fact, however, violations of the Code, such as failure to disclose negative information about a listing or contacting another agent's client directly, are also violations of state licensing laws. To me, the greater value of dealing with a Realtor like those of us at Golden Real Estate is our commitment to professionalism and to the industry, expressed in part by our willingness to pay those dues.

NAR's lobbying on behalf of property rights benefits all agents as it does all property owners, and deserves the support of *all* licensees.

Electric Vehicle Roundup

Last Saturday's EV roundup in Golden Real Estate's parking lot was a great success, with over 20 owners bringing their cars and chatting with each other and would-be EV owners about their cars. In a video at www.GoldenREblog.com Jim Smith takes you around the parking lot, introducing you to most of them.

April's Green Home of the Month



Each month a different home from the Metro Denver Green Homes Tour is featured at www.GreenHomeOfTheMonth.com. This month's selection is the Larsons' home on Lookout Mountain. It has no natural gas service. Instead it has radiant floor heating using water heated by the sun and stored in a 10,000-gallon tank. The original section of the home won first place in the original "Solar Decathlon" in 2002. In addition to extensive solar thermal panels and evacuated tubes, the home has 7 kW of solar photovoltaic panels to satisfy the electrical needs of the home. It also has passive solar features and two wood-burning stoves.

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