

MODULAR DESIGN

Modular Design is a term used in the building industry to name a method of building homes and other small buildings. Modular designed homes may also be called Manufactured Homes or Prefabricated Homes. The difference in the meaning of these terms varies and may be used to describe a variety of building types. The main structural differences are determined by federal building codes. Many prefabricated homes are built to the Federal HUD standard building code, which protects consumers from buying dangerous houses. To conform to the Federal HUD code these homes must also be built on an underlying steel frame and rely on its own wheels for transport to the home site. These manufactured homes, also known as Mobile Homes, are not preferred by real estate investors because in they depreciate in value over time unlike traditionally built houses which appreciate in value over time. Prefabricated and manufactured homes that are not bound to Federal HUD standards but are designed to meet local and state standards are considered much more valuable than mobile homes and are closely comparable if not more valuable than traditional, site built homes and buildings.

As you may have figured out Manufactured or Modularly designed homes and buildings are built in a climate-controlled factory. The building is built in sections or modules on the factory floor and then shipped to the building site by flatbed truck or other similar means. All the interior features including electricity, plumbing, paint and finishing can be done in the factory before it is shipped. Traditional building on the other hand is constructed from the ground up at the building site itself. Lumber must be cut on site as well as installing plumbing and electricity infrastructure. Weather conditions and quality of highly skilled labor dictate the speed and efficiency of the building process. In a factory setting weather conditions do not interfere with building and the need for skilled labor is greatly diminished because of the intricate design of modular building. Manufactured homes are considered highly energy efficient because of their precise engineering. Overall the process of building a Modular home is considerably more efficient and result in significant cost savings to consumers.

At the present time housing is once again becoming scarce, as are raw materials for building and worldwide energy resources. The current housing industry relies on time tested building techniques and businesses models that are becoming obsolete. New technological advances in materials and energy generation as well as new and reincarnated design methodologies associated with concepts of sustainability have got a new generation of architects reconsidering modular design as viable solution.

<http://www.glidehouse.com>
<http://www.thedwellhome.com>

History

Over the years Modular homes have gotten a bad name. Most of this is because of their kinship to mobile homes, which lack considerable quality and value, compared to a traditional home. There have also been a number of reincarnations of the Modular home and building industry for example Sears Roebuck successfully sold tens of thousands of manufactured homes through mail order catalog in the early part of the twentieth century. After the Second World War recreational vehicles became very popular while at the same time a housing shortage developed throughout the country. Needless to say recreational vehicles became an easy and affordable housing solution for many veterans returning from Europe and over seas.



Lifestyle

Around ninety five percent of all new homes in the United States are built without the expertise of trained professional architects. Architects design for people to live better, more productive and satisfying lives. Without this expertise our quality of life is diminished. Modular homes however can be designed to high standards and be mass-produced, lowering prices and increasing value for the ever-growing homeowner consumer base. Mass-produced does not mean cookie cutter either. Many modular designs are designed to take many different forms for different purposes or individual tastes. The Glidehouse below, designed by Michelle Kaufman, makes use of sustainable design techniques like passive solar energy collection and energy production accessories like wind power generators and photovoltaic panelling.



The Dwell Home

The Dwell Home is the recent winner of a prefabricated home design contest organized by Dwell Magazine a popular architecture periodical. The basis for the contest was to "Design an innovative prefabricated house for \$175,000, one that bucks the status quo and embraces all the benefits—esthetic, environmental, economic, technologic—that prefab construction has to offer." The winning design firm was Resolution: 4 Architecture; NY. The design is based on a system of modular units that can be arranged in a large variety of ways depending on the individual clients needs. The way the customer gets what they want while maintaining the integrity of the manufactured process.

