

Front Range HOME

The newsletter of your Colorado Real Estate agent

Prefab Is Here



pre·'fab *noun.* a prefabricated structure; fabricated at a factory so that construction consists mainly of assembling and uniting standardized parts

A quiet but significant revolution is taking place in housing today. It is called prefab, the latest retro movement by the architecture world's ardent modernists. Often labeled "manufactured housing," this rapidly growing area of interest should not be confused with the manufactured housing of old. Today's prefab does not mean trailer parks with barking dogs, mothers in curlers and their shirtless boyfriends sitting on lawn chairs in the driveway.

Prefab is a modern, often elegant take on reducing the cost of construction to produce custom homes for every homebuyer in virtually every price range. Premanufactured housing is certainly not new, but the growing interest in it is a fairly recent trend. Spurred by publications such as *Dwell*, which produced the first magazine-sponsored contest to build prefab on the cheap, prefab has caught on big.

What Is Prefab?

In the prefabrication process, homebuyers and their architect work together with manufacturers to produce custom homes, usually based on premanufactured "modules." These modules are constructed at a factory, saving production costs in too many ways to list here, but almost always resulting in lower purchase prices for the consumer.

In most cases, architects who wished to promote prefab manufacturing have designed these pre-built modules—designers and engineers who had a vested interest in doing a particularly good job. All of

which means that, when you buy prefab, you end up with a unique, quality home.

Often, buying a prefab home means you work minimally with an architect or without one altogether, saving you even more in design and construction costs. Architects generally charge up to 10 percent of a project's total cost. Buying prefab can entail working directly with a manufacturer or its representative, which spreads costs out over the breadth of many projects such as yours.

How Customized Can It Get?

Choices in how modules are assembled, as well as finishing details, help to make each prefab home unique. Add to the equation that each building site is different from the next, and landscaping eventually fills out the property in a distinctive way, no two prefabs end up looking the same.

For example, you might choose a two-story model with bedrooms in the back and a large upper-story deck out front. Your façade may feature painted lapboard siding and red brick accents. You could finish your kitchen with stone counters and floors. The next homeowner could also choose to build a two-story home but his bedrooms might be in front with a home office and master suite placed in the rear. His siding may be concrete tile or concrete walls with stone accents. Even if this home were right next to yours—and this, of course is unlikely at best—neither you nor your neighbor would recognize similarities between the two. Prefab is as customizable as homebuilding gets.

Buying or Building Prefab

If this new (actually old) trend in modern building piques your interest, you might be wondering where to start. The best place is probably your real estate agent. Another source is the Colorado Manufactured Housing Association (303-832-2022).