

Modular homes — an innovative class of their own

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Created with the same materials and methods as traditional site-built, or “stick-built,” homes, modular homes are built off-site in sections, then pieced together and placed on a foundation at the owner’s property. Although sometimes confused with manufactured or mobile homes, according to Timberland Homes representative Garry Jackson, they differ in major ways.

A popular trend back east, and in other countries where site building is excessively expensive, modular homes are built according to state, local and international building codes, while manufactured homes meet federal HUD standards only. Manufactured homes are built on a non-removable steel chassis and transported to the destination on their own wheels, while modular homes are transported on a removable transporter and placed on a foundation. Manufactured homes can be difficult to finance and often depreciate in value, whereas modular homes qualify for regular home mortgages and appreciate in value over time.

Jackson says cost, convenience and design flexibility are a few of the major reasons homebuyers choose modular homes. “Our process is less stressful than conventional site-built homes,” he said.

Buyers have the flexibility of choosing parts of different styles from Timberland’s dozens of home plans and combining them into a unique floor plan. “Each house can be different. It’s really up to the customer to dictate to us what type of home they want,” he said.

Timberland uses 2x6 framing and 2x10 Douglas fir floor joists on 16-inch centers. Jackson notes the strength of their homes, which is evidenced by the fact the homes withstand being transported. Each house is built to 95 percent completion in Auburn, Wash., in 90 days then transported to sites around the Pacific Northwest, from remote acreages in the San Juan Islands to tiny Seattle city lots. It takes approximately four weeks to complete the building on site.

Homes range in price from \$130,000 to over \$1 million, but typically cost 15 to 20 percent less than stick built homes, said Jackson. From an 800-square-foot cottage to a 3,600-square-foot, three-bedroom home with a study and casita, and every size in between, the customizing options are nearly limitless.

A tour of the Aspen design at Timberland’s Mount Vernon model home village reveals quality features like dark acacia wood floors, solid core six-panel doors, 10-foot ceilings, Craftsman interior millwork and granite countertops. The contemporary Alki features green building materials such as bamboo flooring and Caesarstone countertops, plus a stone tile fireplace and tons of natural light. The expansive Regency Park design has an 868 square-foot mother-in-law residence, separated from the main home by a large deck with an outdoor fireplace. The master bath is like an entire wing of the house in itself with a freestanding glass shower, soaking tub, sitting area and giant walk-in closet. With a price tag of \$595,000, there is nothing even remotely “manufactured” feeling about this house.

Jackson says their typical customers are between 40 and 65 years old and looking to build a home on a piece of property they may have owned for some time, although he works with many younger buyers as well. Wanting a guaranteed price, working under a tight deadline, and avoiding the hassle of building their own home are reasons people often choose a modular home over site-built construction.

Timberland has model villages in Auburn and Mount Vernon and shows display homes at the Seattle Home Show each year. To view examples of home plans, visit www.timberland-homes.com.