CITY PARADE OF HOMES

The Firecracker Model Goes Back to Basics

THRUH DEVELOPMENT
By Barbara F. Bronstien

The 1990s are going back to basics, according to George Thrusl, president of Thrusl Development. "People are more practical and careful with their expenditures," he said.

That's the philosophy behind the Firecracker—Thrusl Development's entry in the City Parade of Homes. "Our layout is really very simple, practical and functional," Thrusl said. "We have really captured the spirit of the original Chicago cottages that were built after the Chicago Fire of 1871.

In fact, its builders call the 2-story home the hottest thing to hit town since the great Chicago Fire of 1871.

The 1,385-square-foot home has an authentic exterior with a high-pitched roof and masonry front. With its five-step front stoop—just like the ones Chicagoans of yesteryear perched upon—it would be at home in any city lot.

"Our attempt has been to adhere fairly rigidly to the architectural concept of the city of Chicago," Thrusl said. "Our house will fit in anywhere.

Inside the Firecracker, the layout has changed more to keep up with the times. In the 19th century, rooms would have been smaller and more numerous. Today, the rooms are larger but still larger for contemporary families, which tend to be smaller than in the past.

For example, a huge upstairs bedroom is designed to accommodate two young children with living and play space. Priced at $129,900, the home opens into a spacious living room with a bay window that is part of its classic bungalow appeal. A large hall closet rests just inside the front door, and a utility closet on the side of the living room cleverly masquerades as another closet, behind the same folding doors.

The living room leads to the kitchen-dining area. A U-shaped kitchen opens into the dining room that's more than a dining room. "This is where people are going to spend an awful lot of time," Thrusl said. "It's going to be used as a great room.

The kitchen has plenty of oak cabinets, a stainless-steel sink, gas range and a built-in dishwasher. The cabinets and counter space give it a bigger feel, and a window lets in the sun.

A back door leads from the kitchen to a small deck. It faces a single-car concrete pad, a potential garage foundation.

The dining room and powder room sit between the living room and the kitchen.

The house is set up as a 2-bedroom. In this case, the bedroom has a large view of the kitchen for the necessities, such as bunkbeds and ample play space. When the kids get older, a partition and door could be added to split the bedroom into two more private bedrooms.

Another option for the large 18-by-15-foot room is to use it as the master bedroom and designate the other bedroom as a second bedroom, guest or family room.

The model's standard-sized master bedroom also has a large walk-in closet and its large windows face the street. A short hall leads from the master bedroom to the bathroom and other bedroom.

Project manager Tom Roane boasts the hall is the only "unfused" space in the whole house. The 6-panel doors on the rooms' walls lead the way to the second level, and the house is featured on the main floor.

Chicago House Offers Flexibility

CREATIVE CONSTRUCTION
By Deborah Leigh Wood

Affordable and flexible, the Chicago House XVI is an open floor plan with a glass exterior. The 2,600-square-foot home has three bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, and 3,500 square feet of space. It's priced at $154,400.

Company President Bill Smith points out, owners get two residencies for the price of one if they choose to turn the lower level into a rental apartment by adding a kitchen and bath. It already has a separate entrance.

Or, that space can serve as an office or studio that's accessible from the main house by stairs that already are framed out.

Smith likes to talk about details, the kind of details that make this very contemporary house distinctive. One such detail is the P-shaped breakfast bar, a quirky touch to a design element seen in many homes. The bar acts as a friendly divider between the kitchen and living room.

Because the ceilings are 9 feet high, decorative or utilitarian items can be stacked on the top of the kitchen cabinets—which are a generous 42 inches high—without looking cramped.

In fact, openness and airiness are the hallmarks of this home. Between floor-to-ceiling windows, an open floor plan, natural hardwood floors and streamlined furnishings, one need never feel confined to the space. Rather, because the entrances are at the top of a flight of steps, one feels perched above the neighborhood, or, as Smith said, "on top of things."

People feel on top of things, Smith surmised, are people on the go. People on the go don't have a lot of time to make large sit-down dinner parties.

A cozy area replaces a formal dining room.

The Chicago House XVI model has a glass exterior.

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