



COURTESY LIVINGHOME

## GREEN-FAB HOUSE

Joining the wave of architects who have embraced prefabricated housing, veteran modernist Ray Kappe is currently completing a prefabricated house in Santa Monica's Ocean Park district, the first in a series of architect-designed homes for a new company called LivingHomes, started last year by Steven Glenn, a self-described "frustrated architect" and one-time high-tech and software developer. LivingHomes promises to be the "leading home-builder" for buyers who "value design, health, and sustainability."

Beyond its appeal as an authentic example of California modernism—its architect is one of the founders of SCI-Arc—the Kappe house embodies several tall ambitions for prefabricated homes. Not only has Glenn made a point of reining in construction costs to around \$250 per square foot, he is also targeting LEED Platinum accreditation for the prefabricated structure, a rating that no residential project has earned to date.

With the Kappe prefabricated house, as well as another model commissioned from local architect David Hertz, Glenn is carving a unique platform for his LivingHome products. "We are trying to provide the smallest impact on the land with the highest level of design," said the developer, who plans to produce the homes at new sub-

A rendering of Ray Kappe's first prefabricated house for LivingHome in Santa Monica, now being assembled.

divisions near Joshua Tree, a desert city east of Palm Springs, as well as in a multi-family development in Santa Barbara.

The developer has commissioned four designs from Kappe ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 square feet and selling for between \$350,000 and \$650,000. Glenn plans to act as both manufacturer and developer of the units, and will offer the homes both pre- and post-assembly.

Far from the boxy forms that typify recent designer prefabs, Kappe's 2,500-square-foot, two-story model home features tall, double-height spaces at the core. An exposed steel structure is one of several technical innovations in the fabrication. For Kappe, who was part of the California mid-century modernism movement, the realization of the prefabricated model house is the fulfillment of what he called a "50-year dream of assembling housing entirely from pre-assembled modules."

He defined his design problem by asking, "How do you give modular housing the same feel as custom homes, so the house does not feel like a bunch of boxes?" His design reflects "a fair amount of compromise and change" as a result of discussions with the house's fabricator, Santa Fe Springs-based Profile Structures Inc., which specializes in modular building components for schools. Kappe's design decisions were shaped in large part by the fabricator's usual techniques and materials.

Zoning, not building technology, posed the greatest difficulty to building the prototype, said Kappe. Santa Monica's strict zoning laws and height limits obliged Kappe to reduce the size of several steel-framed modules, as well as create a split-level foundation. Buyers can purchase the basic modules—steel frames measuring 12-by-8-feet—which can be configured horizontally or vertically and modified to its site.

Reducing waste was behind Glenn's interest in prefabricated housing. In conventional, "stick-built" housing, up to 40 percent of construction materials end up in landfills, he noted, while manufactured housing can limit waste to about 3 percent.

Can design sell prefabs? Apparently so. According to Kappe. "I've already had a dozen inquiries about the model home," he said, "and I'm not even on the sales team." **MORRIS NEWMAN**

LAX BEGINS CONSTRUCTION TO MAKE ROOM FOR NEW SUPERJUMBO AIRBUS

## LAX Expands

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is in a constant state of expansion or renovation. Recently, Los Angeles City Council approved the start of construction of the South Airfield Improvement Project, a \$300 million initiative that will increase the space between the airport's two south runways and install a center taxi lane for airplanes. It's the first major construction at the 77-year-old airport in more than two decades, and is motivated in part to allow the airport to accommodate the large wingspan of the new double-decker Airbus A380. Qantas Airways announced that it plans to fly the A380, which is still being tested, on its routes between LAX and Australia starting in 2007 or 2008.

LAX will be among the first airports in the world to receive the 500-seat airplane, provided plans for the expansion stay on schedule. People have cause for skepticism, however: In 2005 local residents and L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa quelled an approved expansion plan. As part of a lawsuit settled this year, the airport will discontinue passenger operations at ten narrow-body gates at the rate of two gates per year starting in 2010, ostensibly to balance the growth of wide-body jets at the airport. Meanwhile, construction will begin this summer on a major, \$410 million upgrade of Tom Bradley International Terminal, the first the terminal has gotten since opening in 1984. Also on the boards is a \$400 million plan to overhaul the airport's complex baggage system. Most of the upgrades are long overdue and are taking into account the impact of the new A380 on airport gates, air bridges, and baggage systems. **AY**

innovation  
design  
technology  
diversity

Visit us at the Pavilion  
of Spain at AIA,  
Los Angeles,  
June 8-10,  
Booth  
#337

