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August 2006

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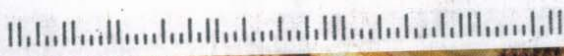
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BOXED IN

V2WORLD IS THE TALK OF THE TOWN. BUT TALK IS CHEAP

BY JOE WATSON

When Phoenix-based prefab designer v2world began publicizing its space-efficient v2flat in the spring, all the hype surrounding the boxy abodes foretold a future as bright as the Valley is sizzling.

That was the buildup. But reality for v2world's leading men, CEO Tim Russell and designer Vine Saccento, hasn't been as illustrious as those first press clippings predicted. At least, not so far.

"It has been difficult, absolutely," says Russell, who's been spending most of his time lately devising proposals and putting a happy face on his and Saccento's obvious frustrations. "We realize, though, that it's very hard to get people behind a concept, to see exactly what we see when we don't actually have the product yet."

A concept is really all that the v2flat is, at this point, more than six months after the hype began. On paper, it's a slam-dunk. Simultaneously, the flat is prefabricated — its 450- to 720-square-foot shells assembled almost entirely offsite — and yet site-specific, meaning a v2 client can stack as many v2 boxes in as many different shapes and sizes as they want. A developer could have an all-residential complex of v2flats, or a mixed-use project in a matter of weeks.

Since the bulk of the construction takes place offsite, installing a flat is minimally invasive to its surrounding environment. And, it's economically practical, as well, with the price tag of a basic shell at around \$125,000 — not including the price of the land on which it sits.

"It's a cash cow whether I want it to be or not," says Saccento, who conceptualized the v2 for the "average person," who he says wants a smaller living space that maximizes efficiency these days. "It's a \$1 billion industry, I've been told over and over. It just takes time."

To date, Saccento and Russell have done a commendable job of maintaining a steady buzz about the project. But beyond the renderings and computer-generated prototypes, no one has had the chance to see how livable the v2flat actually is.

That should change within the next few months, after Saccento breaks ground on a three-story unit in central Phoenix he says will serve as v2's flagship design. But he's disappointed the concept hasn't taken off faster.

"The thing I'm most discouraged by is people's lack of vision," he says. "We should be doing the housing for ASU Downtown. We should be working more with the City of Phoenix. I have no idea why we're not."

PREFAB 5

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