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REAL ESTATE AND HOME DESIGN



## Buy in the Sky

HIGH-RISES, CONDO HOTELS AND LUXURY LOFT LIVING

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# Out of the Box

Prefab steps into the future.

BY ERIKA HEET





## LivingHomes

On the morning of April 13, 2006, the sun came up over a bare lot in a quiet, hilly Santa Monica neighborhood. Eight hours later, a 2,480-square-foot two-story modern residence stood firmly on the site. Glazing, cabinetry and finishes took several more days, and within a few weeks, owner Steve Glenn, founder of the sustainable building company LivingHomes, moved in.

Designed by architect Ray Kappe, the LEED platinum-rated home was pre-measured and -cut in a factory, then pieced together in one day with the help of a crane on-site, virtually eliminating the usual delays and material waste associated with building—not to mention the months, or even years, of grating noise neighbors must usually endure during construction.

“I’ve been amazed by the reaction to the first one,” says Kappe, founder of the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) who, along with architect David Hertz, has designed several prefab models for LivingHomes. Kappe explains that all the construction prep work takes place at a factory, where the main pieces are assembled to a degree, ensuring everything fits together properly. These are then disassembled, taken to the site and placed on the foundation. “The design was based upon an idea I had about

40 years ago,” notes Kappe, who repeatedly presented the concept through the years but couldn’t muster enough intrigue to get it built. “The interest just wasn’t there at the time. But we’re seeing a lot of interest now.”

Kappe’s first completed home includes a tucked-away garage and a rooftop meditation deck—or LivingRoof—that affords 360 degree views, a design available in some models. Walls can be designed to move as the owners’ spatial needs grow or subside, and floor plans, layouts and finishes are completely customizable. The LivingHomes website allows users to plug in their specific set of criteria, such as site condition and square footage, for a solid cost estimate. For example, a 5,000-square-foot, LEED silver-rated custom Kappe home going onto an uncomplicated, flat site is estimated to cost around \$2.1 million. Cut the square footage in half, and the price falls to less than one million. From design to build out, standard homes take around 46 weeks, with custom models taking 54.

“Sustainability is a real buzzword this year,” says Kappe. “It’s all over the world now. We’re getting calls from everywhere.”

*LivingHomes, 310.581.8500, [www.livinghomes.net](http://www.livinghomes.net)*

**Opposite: Architect Ray Kappe designed this LEED platinum-rated home for the owner of LivingHomes, manufacturers of sustainable prefab residences. Above: Light floods into the open living area, composed of healthy building materials.**