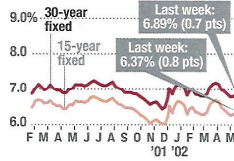


**BRENDEL PATTERSON
IN FRIDAY
REAL ESTATE**



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PAGE 17H.

CREATING SPACES

With bedrooms, concentrate on quality rather than quantity. **PAGE 1J.**

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**PHASE
6**

THE HOUSE CHRONICLES LOOKS AT HOW TO CHOOSE MATERIALS AND COLORS THAT OFFER GREAT CURB APPEAL

THE HOUSE CHRONICLES



FASHIONABLE FACADE



SHINGLES: 3 tab asphalt, mixed brown, 28-year guarantee, \$37 per 100 sq. ft., wholesale and uninstalled.



SIDING: Vinyl, popular and easy to install. \$52 per 100 sq. ft., wholesale, compared to fiber-cement siding at \$85.



WINDOWS: Vinyl, double-pane standard at this home's price range. Price on a 3-by-5-foot window about \$225 uninstalled.



TRIM: Rough-sawn lumber, for an extra \$200, primed and dried at the factory to prevent splitting then repainted on-site.



BRICK: Roughly \$280-\$300 for 1,000 bricks (700 sq. ft.), but installation more than doubles the cost. Figure 4 1/2-5 times the cost of vinyl.



Photos by WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press

ABOVE: Sheathing choices for the House Chronicles home include brown shingles and bricks and beige siding



Terry McEwen, left, and Jim McEwen put standard 3-tab, asphalt shingles on the roof of the House Chronicles home in Van Buren Township.

**JUDY ROSE
REAL ESTATE WRITER**



If you think of the exterior sheath of your house as its haircut, suit, jewelry and shoes, you'll recognize its importance.

The front elevation, the window style, trim, siding, paint colors, brick, stone or cedar shingles you choose will present your house as a cool Armani or a flashy Versace.

Beyond your personal taste, it's smart to dress for your neighborhood. Dearborn neighborhoods look different from Shelby Township or Novi; Canton looks different from Troy.

The house sheathing choices are the major ones you'll make after location, builder and floor plan. First, these choices have impact. "Curb appeal is very high on a customer's wish list," says Greg Kime, sales manager for RDK Homes, which is building the house the Free Press is following in the House Chronicles.

Second, you need to lock your exterior choices in early to make sure you get them.

Most subdivisions won't let clients repeat their

Please see FACADE, Page 17H

Readers weigh in on house decisions

Free Press readers have some pretty good advice, and they're showering it on the House Chronicles. Here are excerpts from a few of the helpful letters.

On mixing an oak kitchen floor with maple cabinets (we had decided against this and picked tile instead):

"We had an insurance claim that proved cheaper to replace the damaged original linoleum with oak flooring. We have maple cabinets and the match is beautiful.

Anyone who spends a lot of time on their feet in the kitchen knows how brutal ceramic tile can be. The oak allows more comfort, is cheaper and dishes dropped on it stand a better chance of survival." — Richard Copeland, Van Buren Township. He built a house in Walden Woods, using an alternate builder there, Winnick Homes.

Copeland later wrote to offer a caution if a home owner is thinking of putting the laundry room on the second floor:

"I should have put the laundry room in the base-

Please see READERS, Page 17H

THE PROJECT SO FAR:

Tracking a new house as it's built in Van Buren Township, Free Press Sunday Real Estate readers have watched as we picked a floor plan and chose \$21,225 in extras. Workers dug the hole, poured the basement, then, last week, built the structure's wooden frame. Those reports are online at www.freep.com/realstate/chronicles/htm.

Today, in phase 6 of 12, the house being built by RDK Homes starts getting its public face — shingles, siding, brick, windows and trim. Come back to the Free Press Sunday Real Estate section June 9, when we'll show details of a system that's invisible in a finished house but critically important to the owner's satisfaction — the insulation package.

Phase 6, Today

THE EXTERIOR SHEATH

The windows, the roof, the brick, the siding.

Phase 7, June 9

BUNDLING UP

Insulation options — what you don't see pays off.

Phase 8,

THE SYSTEMS

Plumbing, electricity — choices you will live with.

Phase 9,

THE INSIDE SKIN

The drywall, the paint, the trim.

Phase 10,

THE INSTALLATIONS

Choosing countertops, floors and fixtures.

Phase 11,

THE SURROUNDINGS

Landscape, hardscape, patios and decks.

Phase 12,

THE FINALE

The walkthrough, the closing, the warranty, the keys.

TIP: Shedding water

Beauty aside, the prime function of your home's sheathing materials are to seal it against water. "Walk around the house and imagine yourself as a raindrop," says Brian Kime, "making sure you will always run away from the house."

If you have a spot where the structure can't avoid creating a water-holding V-shape, make sure your roofer builds a saddle. That's a flat area built up over the V, so water will shed, not sit.

A growing practice you should ask for is a sealant tape now sold with house wrap like Tyvek. Installers tape the house wrap and all the openings in the windows and doors to seal out rain. The alternative is very good caulking.

FACADE | How to choose materials that offer curb appeal

From Page 1H

next-door neighbor's exterior colors. Locking in fast saves the popular colors for you.

As you lock in your choices, remember this advice: If resale value is important to you, lean toward styles popular in your area.

That's not a vote for Stepford styling. By all means follow your muse. But it's not smart to have a house wildly different in style from its neighbors just as it's not smart to have one extremely different in size.

Whatever the style, a house looks more appealing in a neighborhood with the same mood.

Making a splash

In Van Buren Township — where RDK Homes is building this two-story home for the House Chronicles — the mood is less Armani and more Versace. New house buyers here favor flash.

That's true in much of metro Detroit's hot-building areas, including the townships that sweep across western Wayne and eastern Washtenaw counties — Van Buren, Canton, Plymouth, Brownstown and Ypsilanti townships. It's true also in middle Macomb County — Sterling Heights and Macomb and Shelby townships — where light beige is popular, along with red brick.

House shoppers in Van Buren Township will value the splashy details we've added — the two-story arch over the front door, the round-topped Palladian window, the sparkling leaded-glass door.

And because RDK Homes will sell this house after the 12 episodes of the House Chronicles, we're treating it as you would if you were building a house but knew you'd move soon. We're gearing this house for resale.

With that in mind, the Free Press team had Kime — who has been marketing houses in western Wayne County for about 10 years — guide our exterior choices. He wanted them light and bright. Here's how it went.

ELEVATION AND FACADE: On March 31 in the Free Press Sunday Real Estate section, we described spending an extra \$8,700 for the flashy front that has a two-story brick arch and a large rounded window over the door (see the entire House Chronicles series online at www.freep.com/realstate/chronicles.htm). That was strictly a resale decision. It's a very popular look here, and Kime strongly recommended it.

If you are new-house shopping, don't stop at the front; look critically at the back and sides. Some new houses' back sides look like backslides — an unattractive jumble of unrelated windows.

But on this house from RDK Homes, as well as others you can find in the market, designers took the trouble to create a back view with clean, pleasant lines.

BRICK: Nearly every buyer starts by choosing brick, says Kime.

In typical metro Detroit subdivisions, houses are some combination of brick with siding. Local prejudice says the amount of brick on your house signals your status, like the size of a diamond.

If you agree with this thinking — and not everyone does — shop for a builder who includes more brick in a house's base price. Here are some possibilities:

- All brick.
- All-brick front, first-floor brick on three sides.
- First-floor brick on all sides.



Juan Galvan puts the light beige vinyl siding on the House Chronicles home. Vinyl siding can look cheap or very good, depending on the aesthetics and trim with which it's installed.

- First-floor brick on front, brick along foundation on three sides.
- First-floor brick on front only.
- Brick detail, like around a bay window, on front only.
- Brick only as an option.

Most builders who include some brick also offer more as an option. It's often part of an exterior package with changes like a larger porch, more roof gables or a bay window.

According to RDK engineer and designer Brian Kime, brick ends up being 4½ to 5 times as expensive as vinyl siding.

Finally, some builders offer decorative brick work — outlining doors and windows in a way that adds a rich texture. This is especially popular in Macomb County, which has a tradition of good brick work, and in high priced houses anywhere.

At Walden Woods, RDK Homes includes four sides of first-floor brick in the base price — a good amount for a house in the \$200,000s.

"As a company, we like brick," says Greg Kime. "We think the market likes brick." The two other builders here — Walden Woods Homes and Winnick Homes — do the same.

As part of the upgrade with the two-story arch, our brick got extended to two stories on the front.

Van Buren residents may like brick, but not the traditional red brick, says Greg Kime, who urged the Free Press team not to choose it for this house.

Light colors sell here, as in much of metro Detroit. But you will see red brick in areas that favor traditional house styles — Birmingham, the Bloomfields, Troy, for example, close to Ann Arbor or in the rare new home in the Grosse Pointes.

Some house styles are not enhanced by brick. The simple neoclassic styles gaining ground today look best as an all-clapboard house. East-Coast-style shingle houses look better with just shingles or an accent of stone.

FRONT ENTRY: After brick, most buyers choose a front door, says Greg Kime. This is a good place to splurge.

The standard front door for RDK's homes in Walden Woods is a six-panel steel door with a half-length glass panel on each side called a sidelight.

At \$925, the first upgrade is a door with a half-moon window in it, with the half sidelights upgraded to leaded glass.

But we took a full leaded glass door with full-length leaded glass sidelights. At \$1,900 it's one of the most notable upgrades, says Greg Kime.

"Every single friend or family member is going to walk through it," he says. "It really dresses up

the front of the home."

For a more traditional house, a good upgrade might be a very handsome wood door — oak or walnut. In a truly contemporary house you might like a glass door in a plain steel frame. You can always start with the standard door and replace it later.

SHINGLES: For this house in Van Buren Township, we chose standard asphalt shingles, called 3-tab shingles, but another good choice would have been dimensional shingles. Their irregular texture adds a rich look to the roof. On this house they would have cost \$850 extra.

"I personally absolutely love dimensional shingles," says Greg Kime. "Less than 50 percent of our buyers upgrade to them, but I think they add a lot."

The shingles for the House Chronicles home are warranted for 25 years and winds up to 60 miles per hour — a fairly typical good warranty. The body is three layers — two kinds of asphalt strips with a layer of microfiber in between.

As for colors, the advice is to stay quiet. Shades of brown and black are all you'll see in the Van Buren market, Greg Kime says, plus an occasional slate color that's gray with a few muted colors added.

One trend you'll see more in a few years is imitation tile or slate roofs made from a concrete blend or fiberglass. "It looks real sharp," says Brian Kime. "You can hardly tell the difference."

PAINT AND TRIM: There's very little paint on the exterior of most houses built today. What looks like wood is often vinyl. The main place you'll see paint is the trim around the windows, doors, porch, pillars and roof edges.

RDK and most other builders use rough-sawn lumber for this trim. RDK buys a form that's sealed, primed and dried at the factory. If rain falls before painters arrive, there's no damage to the wood.

"Since we switched to that, we don't have a problem with knots bleeding through or cupping or splitting of the wood," says Brian Kime.

Some builders do trim these areas with lumber grades that can split and crack. While you're choosing your builder, look at the trim work on existing houses to see if it's high quality.

Nine of 10 clients choose to paint trim the same color as the siding, Greg Kime says. A few choose a contrasting color. If you're thinking of this, try to see an example first, because it could make the house looked chopped up.

SIDING: The bulk of house siding today is vinyl, which doesn't dent like aluminum and doesn't need paint like wood. Work crews like it because it's lightweight and doesn't cut their hands like aluminum. It costs less than wood.

But some upscale subdivisions do require real wood, which has a richer look. Most wood siding today is not conventional boards, according to Brian Kime, but oriented strand board or OSB, formed to look like boards.

One fine newer product is fiber-cement siding, which has become a top choice for high-end and historic-style houses, because it looks so much like real wood. (Come back to the Free Press Sunday Real Estate section next week for more on siding products.) Fiber cement siding does have to be painted at 10- to 15-year intervals.

Wood siding and fiber-cement siding both cost about 1½ times as much as vinyl siding, says Brian Kime.

Common vinyl siding has many variations. A fairly standard siding, says Brian Kime, is called a double-four. Each strip is formed like two rows of siding, with simulated boards each 4 inches deep.

Another type is triple-three — three rows of simulated boards, each 3 inches deep. This smaller board is appropriate for some Victorian-style houses.

On the other hand, if you like the neoclassic houses gaining ground today, those most often use siding or boards 6 or 8 inches deep.

Vinyl siding can look cheap or very good, depending on the aesthetics and trim with which it's installed. Take a good look at any builder's previous work.

The House Chronicles home has double-four vinyl siding. The color is a very light beige, matching the paint on the trim. All these are popular choices today and should be good for resale.

WINDOWS: Windows deserve a whole article of their own, but Greg Kime says most buyers don't question them. "People invest money in whirlpool tubs, but they rarely request an upgraded window."

On one hand, ample windows promote a pleasant mood inside the house. On the other hand, they lose a great deal of heat. The R-value of an ordinary two-pane vinyl window is about R-2, compared to R-13 in the adjacent wall.

Our personal preference is for a good wood-frame window, like those made by Andersen, Pella, Marvin and others, but they're not often included in a midpriced house. (If they were, we would certainly grab that deal.)

Brian Kime says substituting a mid-quality Pella window in this house would cost 2-2½ times the cost of the good vinyl windows that are standard.

What many buyers do want is a window that makes an impressive statement — for example a big arched window in a two-story foyer.

But architectural purists are cold to today's odd-shaped windows. If you vote with this group,

READERS | House decisions debated

From Page 1H

ment where it belongs. The vibrations from the washer-drier, combined with any water backup, will cause the floor to sag over a period of years.

"We have friends who had to have the floor replaced after 10 years for that exact reason. The concrete basement floor is the best solid base for the washer-drier, and a floor drain nearby offers the best insurance against water damage. Then the first-floor laundry room can be converted to a walk-in food pantry!"

On the importance of 16-inch spacing of engineered I-joists:

"Proper installation and fastening of the subflooring to the joists is extremely important. The house I'm living in has I-joists and I'm experiencing problems with flexing and creaking floors.

My builder placed the joists on 20-inch centers — 10-inch in the kitchen, which has ceramic tile and granite countertops.

I would insist I-joists be placed no more than 16 inches on center

and that subflooring be attached with construction adhesive and properly placed fasteners (many nails missed the joists in my house.) Your series offers a great deal of useful information to prospective home builders." — **Richard Swan, Northville Township**

On options to the standard house plan that we chose:

"I think it very wise to have the extra deep garage and essentially a mud room entrance at the garage. The following would also be high on my list:

- A 12-inch deeper basement — such a cheap luxury.

- Basement escape window. Cheap insurance for about \$1,800. Most basements end up with recreation areas, with kids.

- Plan doesn't show basement stair, but I would opt for it to be straight off the garage, with suitable entrance landing on the main floor. Easy in, easy out, without going over nice floors. (Basement stairs nearly always have to fit under the main staircase.)

- A 3-inch-deeper closet would

prevent the annoying pinching of clothing sleeves in the bifold door.

- Basement insulation. Can't understand why \$2,000 of high-value basement insulation was turned down, especially when everyone wanted it. The basement will likely be a prime area of activity. — **Bruce Pease, Riverview**

On flipping a house plan to its mirror image:

"Before we flip a house plan, we need to watch the traffic pattern. Getting out of a car and into the mud room is easier if the entry is at the left front side of the car. Placing dirty dishes in a dishwasher, then putting clean dishes into the cabinet is easier for most of us if we can use our right hand to do it. A grand piano in the living room corner will not look good in a flipped design" (because the view will be of the closed side of the piano lid, not the open side). — **William H.K. Chu, Rochester Hills**

Want to join the discussion? Contact us via e-mail at realestate@freepress.com