

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Builder Banter

BUILDER CREATING SENIOR-FRIENDLY HOMES

R.W. Brunley, a homebuilder, remembers his grandparents caring for his great-grandmother in their home when he was a child. Safe housing options for seniors were limited back then, with older Americans commonly living with family members or in nursing homes. Even the concept of assisted-living centers is a fairly new development. Brunley's hope is to create homes with built-in features that will significantly expand the time people can live independently in their own homes. The first phase of his development, an in-fill project called The Orchard, features villa homes built with safety in mind. These homes will have wide halls for individuals in wheelchairs, corners of the interior walls will be rounded to prevent injuries and doors will open with levers rather than knobs. In addition to the mobility concerns, these houses will be built well. Brunley said he has built the homes to be as wind-resistant as possible. He said they are engineered to earn a 200 mph wind rating. Phase 1 is geared toward mature buyers, singles and empty nesters, while Phase 2 will be geared towards larger homes for families. For more information contact beverlybryant@hotmail.com. [Source: The Oklahoman, Beverly Bryant, October, 2004]

HURRICANE-RATED WINDOWS

Some East Coast builders may have to install storm-resistant windows on coastal area homes. The windows are supposed to reduce property damage from major hurricanes, but they can add thousands of dollars to the cost of a home. Dade County, FL, has required these products for years. When Hurricane Andrew caused \$25 billion in damage in 1992, Florida building officials blamed much of the destruction on wind pressurizing the homes, then blowing off roofs and collapsing walls. To minimize loss during future winds, the code was changed to fortify buildings against wind penetration. This included a requirement for storm-resistant windows and doors. The window requirement headed north in January, when the new International Residential Code began mandating them all the way up the eastern seaboard. Not all areas need the same windows as South Florida. Windows must meet a "design pressure" requirement that's determined by a number of factors, the most important of which is the geographic wind speed zone the house is in. [SOURCE: Charles Wardell, The Journal of Light Construction, October, 2004]

HMI UPDATE

Continuing low mortgage rates and improving economic conditions are helping

maintain a solid level of builder confidence in the market for new single-family homes, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI), released on November 16.

“While rates on long-term mortgages have edged up marginally in the last few weeks, the average 30-year loan remains below 6 percent. That’s a key factor driving buyer demand right now,” said NAHB President Bobby Rayburn, a home and apartment builder from Jackson, MS.

Have an idea for items to include in this new department? Email them to builderbanter@sbcmag.info.

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