

## NEW HOMES

REAL ESTATE CLASSIFIED INSIDE AND ONLINE

CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM/HOMES

CS



The Dwell Home from Resolution: 4 Architects is a prefabricated structure that can be built at a reasonable cost.



Roberta Kerner, Kent & Associates

"Architecture is really the ability to spread out at a moment in time, the world view of the culture and the architect and the owner," says architect Joseph Valerio of this house he designed for Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood.

Architect Rick Phillips says his ultra-modern "Tower House" (left) required a zoning variance because the structure on a 1,651-square-foot lot had no alley access.

William Kildow Photography

Home buyers, architects push house designs to the cutting edge

By Jane Adler

Special to the Tribune

**T**hinking about a new home in 2007? Maybe you're among the brave few who might consider a really new home—a cutting-edge model set out there it stands well apart from its neighbors.

Rick Phillips has the courage it takes. He built a very modern house in Chicago at 1306 N. Cleveland Ave.

A gutsy architect, Phillips now has what he calls his "Tower House." It's a four-story structure that doesn't quite look like a house. Perched on long steel legs, it doesn't resemble an office or apartment building either. It looks like a building you might see, well, somewhere else. It certainly doesn't take after anything around here.

The house is small and vertical, shoehorned on a tiny triangular lot, Phillips describes it as an "upside-down" house because the outdoor space is on the fourth level—better to catch city views.

The first level is a carport. Before Phillips decided to rent it out and build a similar but bigger place next door, passersby would ask him what it was.

When he told them he lived there, they'd usually respond, "That's a house?"

Not many are bold enough to build and live in a really new-looking house. Most of us are content to buy a traditional house with a well-worn design.

Anyone can relate to the standard colonial, the two-story Tudor and the mid-century Victorian.

Then there's the practical issue of resale. Real estate agents are always telling us that modern-looking homes are hard to sell.

Though cutting-edge home designs may never be the rage, there are indications they're gaining acceptance among home buyers.

Architects are coming up with new ideas that have real appeal for those looking for a different kind of house.

There are houses with walls of glass and undefined rooms. There

PLEASE SEE DESIGN PAGE 4

ONLINE

Community profiles: Facts about numerous local areas at CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM/HOMES

# Stretching the limits



Architect John Vinci designed a starkly modern home in Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood for Susan and Allison Davis. Allison Davis (right) describes it as "kind of a cross between a Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe.... It works for us."

Photos for the Tribune by Margie Cohen

## Homes set a high standard for originality

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

are housed made of shipping containers, you shouldn't complain.

Small new houses come in everywhere. Bright-colored designs and there are people building them around the city works that bear no resemblance to what you'd expect to see.

"I don't think people who like modern architecture will ever be the majority," says Allison Karpf, editor at Develco, a San Francisco-based magazine that showcases modern architecture. "But there is a large segment of the population interested in modern design that builds and real estate agents think."

She cites as evidence the growing popularity of the magazine, with a circulation that has grown to 260,000 from 20,000 in 1995. There's also increasing media interest in modern houses. A recent move for his story was the result of the work.

Through modern homes may not be on the radar, Karpf says, but they are making a cutting-edge design in the open marketplace.

### Many plots of vision

Architects get philosophical when asked to describe the modern home design. Though each has his or her own take on the topic, they seem to agree that today's new homes should reflect current times.

Forget the knock-off Victorians or large second-story mansions that actually resemble the production but lack the color and the best facing an architect can offer.

"I'm a fan of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan," says Victor Davis. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

Victoria's problem was an example. Two years ago, he designed a house for a developer in Chicago. "The house is kind of a cross

### egan's North Side Renaissance

On the outside, the single-level house looks like a traditional steel-frame house. There are no windows on the exterior to identify it as a house. The interior is a private high-tech retreat with access to courtyard garden.

"I think that that house plays off current themes of anonymity, privacy and high-tech culture."

"I'd call it a good job, people in the future will say that it's a house from 2004," he says.

Among the hottest home designs are being created by Chicago architects thought central to the scene. Both the houses, though he says he's not excited about that look. Some are colored in bright green or red.

"I think our houses combine contemporary form and functionality with modern materials and construction," he says. "I'd guess as our houses are different, they are wonderfully functional."

Cutting-edge architects hunger for daring clients, though they're hard to come by. "I'm doing a project in Long Grove, Ill., says architect John Vincent. "I was worried about the client asks where the big screen TV goes."

"What does that have to do with architecture?" he asks. "Two years ago, Susan and Alvin Davis built a modern house in the West Loop, known as Kenwood neighborhood. They couple had been living with their young daughter in a high-rise-condominium just off Michigan Avenue."

Like so many when couples, the Davises wanted their daughter to have a house and a yard. "They didn't want to live in Kenwood's historic district. They wanted to live in a house that was modern," says Susan Davis. The couple wanted five architects, but an architect friend recommended an architect named Alvin Vincent.

The Davises hired Chicago architect Vincent to design a house that would be a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

Victoria's problem was an example. Two years ago, he designed a house for a developer in Chicago. "The house is kind of a cross



Photo by the House to Inspire Co. Susan and Alvin Davis created plenty of options for architect John Vincent to design their ultra-modern house in Kenwood.

between a Frank Lloyd Wright house and the house of the future. I don't know if that's what you think when you see it, but it works for me."

The house, however, will not be a copy of a house. The Davises agreed it is contemporary, but the kind of design that fits the neighborhood as well as he says. "But there is nothing about it that's a copy of anything."

Davis says the house design never threatened to be a copy of anything. "I'm a fan of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan," says Victor Davis. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

Architect Vincent, usually a client who is also a fan of the historic house, says he wouldn't do anything to harm the neighborhood. "It's a very tricky house and most people don't see it. It's a very tricky house and most people don't see it. It's a very tricky house and most people don't see it."

In most cases, people can generally walk what they want. "I'm a fan of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan," says Victor Davis. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

The Davises agreed it is contemporary, but the kind of design that fits the neighborhood as well as he says. "But there is nothing about it that's a copy of anything."



The Davises' new house has large windows in the library to admit an abundance of sunlight in the winter.

interior and compatible with its historic neighbors.

He also prefers contemporary designs over bad replicas from another era.

"I don't do reproductions," he says.

Modern houses can present other challenges too. Architect Phillip, principal at Frederick Phillips & Associates, needed a young variation from the best of the plan, Phillip says.

The variance wasn't for the design, but to match the young commissioners were scratching their heads at the plan, Phillip says.

lashed. The variance was needed to allow a house on the lot, 100-square feet, but that was not enough. Phillip had to modify building technology because the design called for exposed steel columns on the exterior, a violation of the city's fire code.

Then there's the cost. Phillip acted as general contractor for the house to help reduce the price. "I have no idea if it's worth it," he says, though the house has several design awards.

Even so, for the new big budget house, he plans to build a house that will last. "I'm a fan of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan," says Victor Davis. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

reduces costs. So far, he has commissioned five other houses. He also plans contemporary designs over bad replicas from another era.

"I don't do reproductions," he says. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

The variance wasn't for the design, but to match the young commissioners were scratching their heads at the plan, Phillip says.

lashed. The variance was needed to allow a house on the lot, 100-square feet, but that was not enough. Phillip had to modify building technology because the design called for exposed steel columns on the exterior, a violation of the city's fire code.

Then there's the cost. Phillip acted as general contractor for the house to help reduce the price. "I have no idea if it's worth it," he says, though the house has several design awards.

Even so, for the new big budget house, he plans to build a house that will last. "I'm a fan of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan," says Victor Davis. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

interior and compatible with its historic neighbors.

He also prefers contemporary designs over bad replicas from another era.

"I don't do reproductions," he says. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

The variance wasn't for the design, but to match the young commissioners were scratching their heads at the plan, Phillip says.

lashed. The variance was needed to allow a house on the lot, 100-square feet, but that was not enough. Phillip had to modify building technology because the design called for exposed steel columns on the exterior, a violation of the city's fire code.

Then there's the cost. Phillip acted as general contractor for the house to help reduce the price. "I have no idea if it's worth it," he says, though the house has several design awards.

reduces costs. So far, he has commissioned five other houses. He also plans contemporary designs over bad replicas from another era.

"I don't do reproductions," he says. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."

The variance wasn't for the design, but to match the young commissioners were scratching their heads at the plan, Phillip says.

lashed. The variance was needed to allow a house on the lot, 100-square feet, but that was not enough. Phillip had to modify building technology because the design called for exposed steel columns on the exterior, a violation of the city's fire code.

Then there's the cost. Phillip acted as general contractor for the house to help reduce the price. "I have no idea if it's worth it," he says, though the house has several design awards.

Even so, for the new big budget house, he plans to build a house that will last. "I'm a fan of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan," says Victor Davis. "I think when people go to a house in Victorian West, they're looking for a house that really is a house, not a copy of a house that was made in a distant time, the world over."