

# Up for sale, model home has all the custom touches

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**H**ome buyers who want the very best that custom building has to offer but who are cautious about the costs and headaches of designing their own dream house might consider buying a builder's model home.

According to John Mikkelson, president of Mikkelson Builders in Mequon, buying a new model home can be less of a hassle and perhaps a little cheaper than building a new home. "You know exactly what you're getting," Mikkelson said. "The contingencies are gone."

The contingencies he is referring to are the unforeseen costs that can come up when building a new home. Typically, when a house is built the owner knows the "bare bones" price, according to Mikkelson. He or she then pays extra costs for sewers, soil studies, landscaping, sidewalks, decks, more extensive foundation work than expected, and insurance and utilities during construction. "You don't know how much

electric you're going to use in construction," Mikkelson said.

**The advantage of buying a** model home is that those contingent costs are in the past, so the price is firm. The buyer gets a new home, often with the best features, but without many of the worries. Mikkelson said, "It's a lot less fuss."

Of course, the buyer doesn't get to customize the home, so it might not be his or her dream house, but model homes still offer many enticing amenities. "There are pluses either way," Mikkelson said.

Mikkelson also said that a model home can cost a little less than building a new house. "The price (of a model home) does not reflect the interest and the holding costs and the taxes." Also, because the builder has a financial buffer from the sales of other homes, they can better negotiate on the model's asking price.

There are two ways of building and selling model homes, according to John's brother, Jim Mikkelson, vice president of Mikkelson Builders. A home may be built strictly for modeling and then put up for sale when it is no longer needed, or it may be built on speculation. Spec homes are built as model homes but are always for sale.

Jim Mikkelson built a spec home last spring he is particularly excited about. "I feel the quality of the design is exquisite," he said.

## Located at 10813 Beechwood

Drive in the Beechwood subdivision of Mequon, Jim Mikkelson described the house as English country style. The 3900-square-foot home has five bedrooms and three-and-a-half baths. The house and property are for sale for \$530,000, including the landscaping. It was built last spring to showcase a design that can be built on the buyer's property for \$394,800 without land developing.

The model home features one wood and one gas fireplace. The gas fireplace, in the master bedroom, includes Italian marble and an oak colonial mantelpiece. The master bath features a whirlpool and decorative tile in the shower. There is an office with built-in bookcases with crown molding. There are six-panel oak doors throughout and hardwood floors in the dining room, kitchen and dinette. The kitchen features a down-draft cooktop with grill. There is also a three-car garage and an unfinished basement. The exterior is brick and cedar siding.



Warm, natural oak is throughout The Cambridge design. A winding stairway leads to the upper floor that has a master bedroom suite with bath, three additional bedrooms and a guest suite with bath.