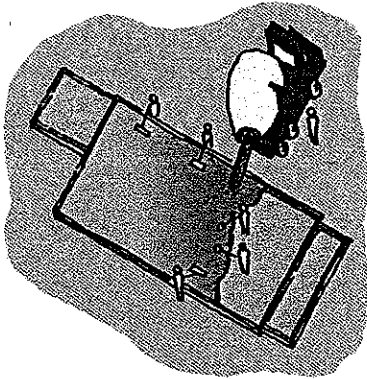
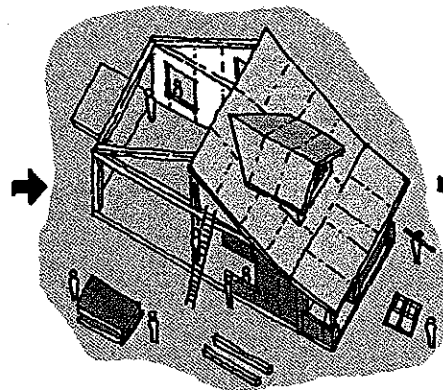


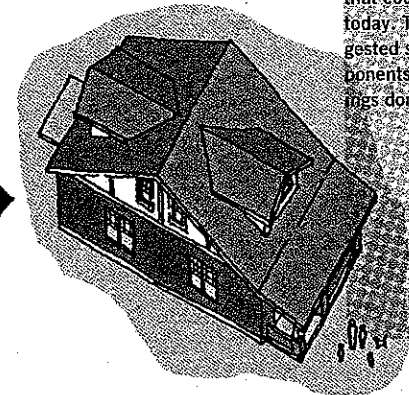
Proposed Building Method



Site Preparation



Exterior and Interior Structure



Finished Home

The first PATH project result in schematic designs for prototype homes with components that could be implemented today. The designs also suggested some visionary components, though HUD renderings don't do them justice.

## Carlos Martin on the PATH Concept Home

An integral part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the Partnership in Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), whose primary mission is encapsulated in its name: to advance technological innovation in the housing industry. PATH's initiatives include culling the best ideas from leaders in the home-building industry to present a vision of what can be (such as the PATH Concept Home), while also working on other more mundane R&D, information, and policy issues, like code approvals and barriers to innovation. We spoke with HUD researcher Carlos Martin, PhD, about how prefab figures into PATH.

**The PATH website describes the lack of investment in new building technologies. How does prefab factor into this?**

Prefab's design is defined by its production, and its production requires specific design constraints and social contexts. The industry's products, processes, and social economic parameters are so inherently interwoven—and have become ever more entrenched and complex over time—that a change in one thread will change the entire fabric. If we can assume that one of the problems of American housing is its apparently traditional design, construction, function, and land use, then something like prefab, which has implications for all these areas, is actually a feasible solution.

**Briefly describe the PATH Concept Home. What obstacles did this project pinpoint and then try to overcome?**

The PATH Concept Home came out of the need to provide a formal synthesis to the many PATH-related research projects, outreach campaigns, and policy initiatives—like a rallying cry for the industry, if you will. I imagine that the discussions we had while generating the Concept Home were very similar to the ones held during the formative stages of your Dwell Home: What are homeowners looking for? What do we know is technologically possible now, and [what] can be possible in just a few years? How does that translate into design and map onto changing homeowner demographics? How do we get industry to get on board?

So, throughout 2004, PATH asked the home-building industry whether it was ready to take on the challenge of building a high-quality, affordable home that could 1) accommodate changing lifestyles (to address America's demographic shifts); 2) adapt to technological advances; 3) be easy to repair and remodel (to address life-cycle concerns); 4) look like custom-built (to improve design); and 5) be built in 20 days (to respond to market shifts quickly).

The first year's project resulted in schematic designs for prototype homes with components that could be implemented today—ideas and technologies that can be adopted into current building practices and that fit well into current market changes. These designs also suggested some visionary components, challenging manufacturers and builders to translate ideas into reality.

**Do you believe prefabrication can help facilitate well-designed housing?**

Too often we equate standard building components with sterile and uniform design. But we all had the same box of Lincoln Logs as kids, and I never knew one kid who built the house on the box cover, or who would build the same structure every time they emptied the contents. This myth of prefab's banality couldn't be further from the truth, and comes more from standardizing outside the home than standardizing its insides. The trick is finding that magic tipping point where you can use prefabricated materials, components, systems, and modules and still create innovative and site-specific buildings.

**Are you optimistic about prefab's future as a progenitor of well-designed housing?**

There have been numerous moments in the past century when prefab has risen as a technologically or economically available alternative. The difference now is that there is a vast market opening up for the first time in U.S. history: Almost 33 percent of U.S. households are now two-person occupied, and almost 27 percent are single-person occupied. The shift from married-with-children households of only a generation ago means not only that there needs to be a different method for producing homes for these many, smaller households, but also that this demographic has dramatically different preferences in home design and needs in home functions. This is a wonderful time to be a booster, but also an ideal time to be a booster who has two feet on the ground. ▶