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Idea House's Time Has Come — Again

Visitors to Sunset magazine's latest Idea House will see more than the latest whiz-bang ideas for home design and decor.

They'll also see a house that's part of a new-home development rich in the magazine's and Menlo Park's history.

The Idea House, called Residence Six, is part of Lane Woods, 32 single-family detached houses that SummerHill Homes is building along Willow Road just west of Sunset's headquarters.

While the Idea House is about 2,998 square feet, the other two-story houses range from 1,719 to 2,429 square feet. Their prices start at about \$1.5 million and go up to more than \$2 million.

The Idea House opens Friday. Although designed by the same architect, its floor plan differs from the rest. It will not be available for sale until the exhibition closes at the end of August.

Lane Woods' 4 1/2-acre site was once part of 7 acres owned and used by Sunset, which had a 40,000-square-foot office building there. Like others on the Sunset campus, it was designed by Cliff May, famed for his ranch-style houses.

Like the nearby Civic Center, Sunset's acreage was carved from Sherwood Hall, also known as the Hopkins estate, which once covered 400 acres between Ravenswood Avenue and San Francisquito Creek. Timothy Hopkins received it as a wedding gift from his adoptive mother, the widow of railroad magnate Mark Hopkins. His bride was her niece, and he had been managing the family's financial affairs.

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Lane Woods gets its first name from the family that founded Sunset. Its second name comes from the 198 trees that were on the site. SummerHill is saving 100 of them, including 11 that are to be transplanted, said Elaine Breeze, the Palo Alto company's senior vice president. It's planting 76 new trees.

"Preservation was a big deal for us and the community," she said. That's why a courtyard from the office building has become Lane Woods' centerpiece park. Ringed by mature trees, it has several benches around a fountain in the courtyard.

There's another small park along Paulson Circle on the project's north side.

A path worn by people cutting across the site is becoming a public bike and pedestrian path that includes the neighboring Morgan Lane residential project. On the south, it links to a foot bridge that crosses San Francisquito Creek into Palo Alto.

The split-rail fence around the project echoes Sunset's fencing.

Designing the project was "all driven by the trees," Breeze said. Therefore, lot sizes vary, as do the houses' shapes. For example, Residence Three, one of the two model homes, is wide and shallow, allowing "us to preserve the row of ash trees along the back," Breeze said.

Trees even determine the location of the two-car garages.

In the Residence Three model, it's on the right rather than facing Willow Road. With no huge door dominating the streetscape, it looks like a more integral part of the house.

Cost close to \$2 million

Residence Three, with four bedrooms and 2 1/2 bathrooms standard, has 2,392 to 2,429 square feet, depending on the garage's location. Its price ranges from \$1.8 million to \$2.05 million.

Approached from a small front porch, the front door opens to an entry hall centered between the dining room and a library. Both rooms are two steps down from the entry, lending a sense of formality and symmetry.



every moment counts

The cozy library has a gas fireplace. As an option, the library can open to the family room, or it can become a bedroom with a closet replacing the fireplace. If this space is configured as a bedroom, the half-bath off the entry hall becomes a full bath.

Continuing the entry's symmetry, the stairway is opposite the bathroom. The entry then leads to the family room and kitchen, both two steps down. The family room has an optional gas fireplace. Patio doors lead to the shallow backyard.

An island defines the kitchen, whose main working area is L-shaped. Along one wall are the coat closet, oven, refrigerator space and pantry as well as a passage to the dining room.

The kitchen is equipped with Wolf stainless steel appliances, granite counters, maple cabinets and 18-inch-square ceramic tile flooring. Similar cabinets are used in the bathrooms, while similar tiles are seen in the bathrooms, nook and entry.

Across from the dining room passageway is the laundry room, with sink, cabinets, window and space for side-by-side appliances. Just past the laundry room is the interior door to the garage, which also has a door to the backyard.

Upstairs, the landing overlooks the entryway. A linen closet and full bath with two sinks also are in this area.

The model has a loft to the right that can be configured as a bedroom. Both options have a door leading to a deck over the porch.

Two other bedrooms are on this side of the house. The larger one is shown with two full-size beds and a window seat.

The master bedroom occupies the rest of the upper floor. It, too, is shown with a window seat.
Big bathroom, closet

Almost as large as the bedroom, the master bath includes a walk-in closet just inside the door. The bathroom itself has a toilet closet, oval tub, shower stall and marble-topped vanities that are



conveniently opposite each other.

All of the houses are GreenPoint Rated. This program stresses - among other factors - energy efficiency, resource conservation and indoor air quality. They have dual-zone air conditioning and forced-air gas heating, 50-gallon water heaters with recirculating pumps to all fixtures, and wiring for ceiling fans in the family room and master bedroom.

They're also wired for high-speed networking.

As part of a city requirement to provide below-market-rate houses, Breeze said, SummerHill is donating "upward of \$2.5 million" to Habitat for Humanity, which is building a 22-unit affordable project in Menlo Park.

The Sunset Idea House will be open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays (except July 4), Saturdays and Sundays from June 27 through Aug. 31. Tickets, available only at the door, are \$15 general, \$5 for those ages 6 to 12 and free for those 5 and younger. People 60 and older receive a \$3 discount on Fridays. Credit cards are not accepted.

For details call (800) 786-7375 or go to www.sunset.com/sunset and click on Idea Houses.