

Experimental Model Homes from our Sun Cities Past -- Ed Allen

The first homes built in Sun City had few frills, but it wasn't long before DEVCO realized prospective buyers wanted and had the means to pay for nicer homes. One way to gauge interest in more deluxe features was through "experimental" model homes. Visitors were given a questionnaire to fill out to indicate their interest in the various new options presented – and their answers would guide the design of the next model homes.

The first of these homes was opened Dec. 7, 1964 for two weeks. Its primary purpose was to gauge reactions to an exterior wall that lent itself to prefabrication. The home also offered an opportunity to gather comments on many other new features as well. All-in-one fiberglass tub & shower unit and Formica countertops were among the most-liked features. Some 4,000 people visited, completing more than 1,700 questionnaires.



A second experimental home opened in 1967. The home was designed around a central garden and fountain. All rooms opened onto the courtyard and had louvered doors. The attached two-car garage had an automatic door opener. Other novel features included a water purifying system, and a built-in vacuum cleaning system.



The kitchen featured a built-in range with a Corning cook top and a gas barbeque, a built-in food center included cordless appliances – mixer, blender, knife sharpener, and juicer.

Ceramic tile was used in the entry, dining area and kitchen. Bathrooms were floored with a cushion vinyl Corolon. There was a Swedish steam bath and shower, a therapeutic whirlpool bath with a six-foot rub, and a built-in dressing table with its own basin.

The master bedroom featured a wall of matched grain doors and cabinet space. A double fireplace served the living and leisure rooms. One living room was covered with a gold-antiqued mirror. A central AM/FM music and intercom system completed the new ideas.

To encourage visitors to complete the survey giving their reactions to these new ideas, the Sun City Merchants Assoc. offered several gift certificates up to \$100 in value. Judging from the homes built afterward, a number of the ideas were offered as options. Those not offered were either ahead of their time or cost prohibitive.

In 1985, the "Silver Edition" selection of model homes opened in Sun City West. They were the first homes with vaulted ceilings, stucco exteriors, and tile roofs.

Adjacent to them was the "House of American Ideas" designed by Taliesin Associated Architects, a successor firm to Frank Lloyd Wright. The 1,600-sq. ft., six-sided home was designed to bring the outdoors into the home's interior – much like the Sun City home above with its central garden and courtyard. This house, however, had a verdigris copper roof, a fired brick exterior, and an arboretum compete with aviary and birdbath in the center of the home.



DEVCO not only experimented with new features, it also tried new concepts in apartment living, two-story villas with an upstairs room for the man of the house, duplexes, patio homes and the "foursomes" – also known as Quads. Add the variety of floor plans and exteriors, and homes in the Sun Cities satisfy almost every desire.