

Distinguishing Between Site Built/Single Family Residences, Mobile Homes, Manufactured Homes, Modular Homes and Panelized Homes

DISCLAIMER: Depending on whom you ask, you can hear a lot of different explanations on the differences between the above referenced home construction methods. The following is a compilation of definitions from numerous sources, and is not intended to be used as a legal reference, but only as a guideline. Buyers and Sellers should verify information from independent sources. Each Lender may have their own definitions.

Site Built/Single Family Residences (SFRs) are "built" on site. After grading the land, the builder constructs a permanent foundation, then frames and roofs the house. After the exterior walls are completed and the building is "dried-in", the interior of the house is constructed on-site, piece-by-piece. The resulting structure is classified as "real-estate", just like the land it is constructed upon, because the foundation and the house are permanently attached to the land and cannot easily be removed without tearing the house apart. This is the most common and familiar type of housing constructed in the United States. However, it is usually the most costly.

Mobile Home, is a factory built housing unit built prior to June 15th, 1976 before the Housing and Urban Development Codes came into effect. This type of home has a tongue and axle attached to the structure and is transported much like a trailer.

Manufactured (MFG) Homes have been described as a large house trailer that can be connected to utilities and can be parked at one place and used as housing, usually in just a matter of a few days. Manufactured Homes are transported in one section for SW (single wide), two sections for DW (double wide) and three sections for TW (triple wide).

Manufactured Homes are considered personal property and are licensed by the state's Department of Motor Vehicles. **Conversion to Real Property:** Special permits are required from the city or county to complete a conversion that will affix the home to a permanent foundation and to obtain title changes that define the property officially as a "real property". After the foundation work is complete, an inspection is required by either the designated city or county agency or, in some cases, Manufactured Home inspectors contracted out to the manufacturers. Most states require an "affidavit of affixture" or a court document before title change is complete.

Common characteristics of Manufactured Homes:

- All are required to have a Department of Housing tag affixed to the rear section of the home. This requirement has been in effect since 1977. ("Manufactured homes constructed prior to 1977 are typically referred to as "mobile homes").
 - This small metal tag will include the point of origin and the home's serial number (VIN number).
 - If the home has more than one section (double-wide, triple-wide, etc.), each section will have a tag.
 - These are normally three letters followed by a serial number. The three letters in the tag number are a reference to the professional engineering firm that oversees the construction of Manufactured Homes to ensure building/manufacturing codes meet state and regional requirements.
 - Each section will have its own HUD number if more than a Single Wide home.

- Multi-section homes always have a marriage line, which is a seam where the sections of the home are joined together. Identification of the marriage line is often the best way to identify a manufactured home. However, please note, a trim strip on the front and back of the home often conceals the marriage line.
- The "peak" of the roof can also be an indicator of a manufactured home because most, although not all, roofs will also have a roof cap along the center of the roof. This roof cap is usually visible from the street. Occasionally, older Manufactured Homes will have flat roofs.
- When a home is located on private property (ground-set), it should have a vapor barrier line, which is a wood strip abutting the ground along the bottom of the home's siding.

Modular Homes are carried in sections on trucks to a building site and then assembled on site. Modular homes appear no different on the exterior than an ordinary "stick-built" home. Modular homes are built to State specifications and are assigned a serial number or ID number. This ensures the correct pieces are delivered to the property where the building will take place. They require multiple inspections before delivery and after delivery to ensure safety and quality standards are met.

Although modular homes are also "manufactured", they are permanently affixed to a foundation and are titled as real property from the time they are assembled on site. The construction materials and methods used to build modular homes generally meet or beat state and local building codes. It is generally not possible to identify a modular home simply by observation. When the home is originally built, the appraisal used to obtain mortgage financing will state that the home is modular. When the home is resold, there may or may not be any indication that the home is modular

Local building codes do not apply to modular homes; instead, these houses are built according to specialized guidelines (Federal HUD regulations in the United States). Also, not all communities permit the construction of modular homes.

Panelized Homes are factory built housing panels that contain doors, windows, wiring, and are built to meet or exceed the state and local building codes, where panels will be assembled on site.