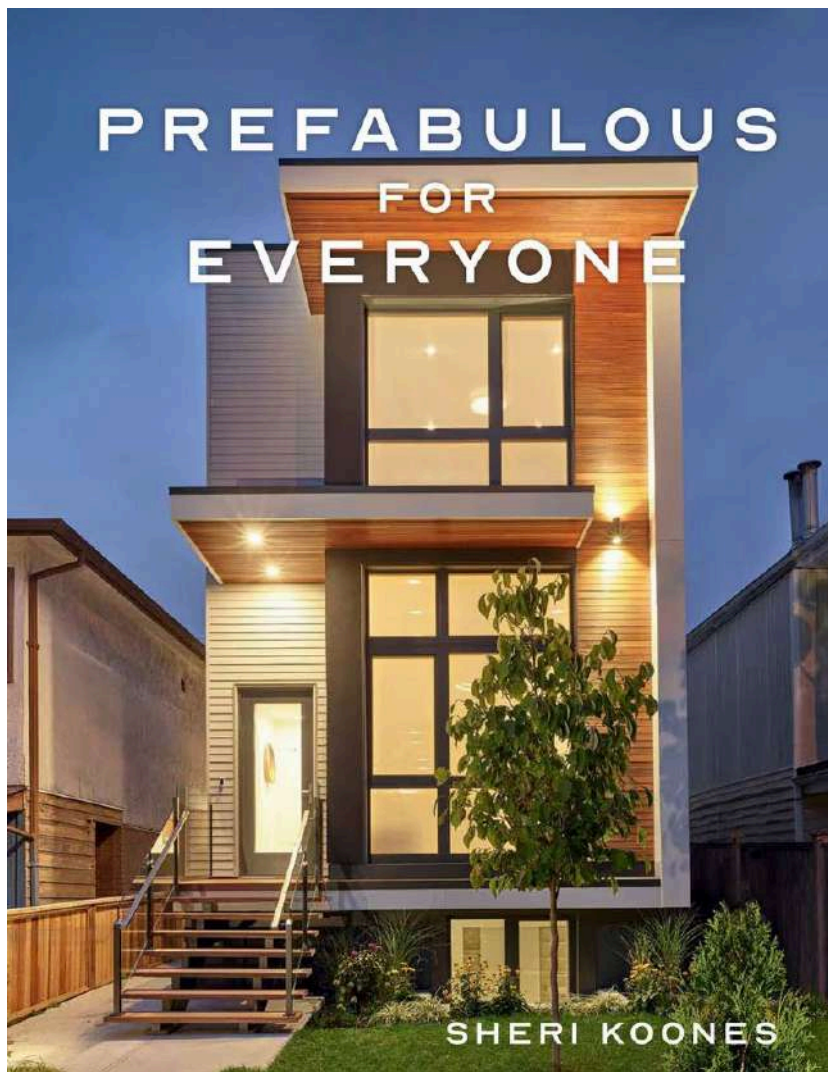


[Homes & Gardens](#)

Factory-built modern Newberg house is ready for its closeup in new 'Prefabulous' book

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Modern modular house in Newberg

NEW!

By [Janet Eastman | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

Robert Newton and John Brackett didn't hear the typical construction racket while their Newberg home was being built. There were no trucks blocking the driveway and no crews being called off because of hindering rain, wind, snow or smoke.

After their 1,500-square-foot modern house was built in a factory, down to the brushed nickel knobs on white kitchen cabinets, it arrived on their property in October 2019 in two rectangular pieces.

By the end of the first day, Terry Hall and his [Square Deal Construction](#) crew had bolted the weather-tight modules together and later to the foundation. In three weeks, the house was move-in ready.

"Water and electricity were connected, and bada bing bada boom, you're in business," said Hall, who has 30 years of construction experience in Yamhill and Washington counties, but this was his first modular project.

Hall was intrigued by Newton and Brackett's need for a local contractor to complete their factory-built, prefabricated dwelling.

Experts say building in an enclosed factory with specialized equipment increases a home's energy efficiency, reduces construction waste and improves working conditions for framers, plumbers and other tradespeople.

The couple moved into their wood-framed home with expansive windows on Nov. 26, 2019. "I will always remember that date because it was two days before Thanksgiving," said Brackett.

He made a vow that no matter how many boxes were left to unpack, the couple would host Thanksgiving dinner. They did.

Custom not cookie-cutter



The kitchen was kept light and airy with white cabinets and appliances and light wood flooring. Gregory D. Specht

Some people who shrug off the idea of a dwelling assembled inside a warehouse envision a mobile home or lookalike "prefab" unit advertised near freeway exits. They expect cookie-cutter instead of custom made.

Newton and Brackett's single-level modular home was designed by architect [Jim Russell](#) of Ideabox in Salem. Russell's company offers [18 models](#), but those plans are just starting places. Clients can modify and rotate the floor plan, then select the style, from the [roof to the bathroom sink](#).

The Newberg house is a customized version of [Ideabox's three-bedroom Fuse model](#). The space for one of the bedrooms was divided to create an office with an adjoining covered patio.

The modulares were built in five months in [Stratford Building Corporation's](#) Idaho factory.

Modulars come in various sizes and can be linked together. A small home can be one or two modulars while a multimillion dollar house can have 10 or more modulars, said Mark Wilson, Stratford's sales manager in Oregon, Idaho and Wyoming. A [multifamily project](#) can be made up of dozens of modulars.

The cost of Ideabox's 442-square-foot studio or ADU (accessory dwelling unit) with covered decks starts at [\\$134,000](#) for its design, engineering and construction that is 85% complete, from doors and windows to finishes and fixtures.

Construction cost is about two-thirds of the budget, [estimates Ideabox](#). The other third covers preparing the site, transporting the modulars on a flatbed truck and a local builder assembling the sections on the foundation.

One of the benefits of a prefab unit is the cost is more predictable than other types of construction, say building experts. Modular is a systems-built construction methodology "with a level of efficiency and precision unattainable in the field," said Wilson.

Tradespeople have workstations with specialized table saws to make precise cuts, materials are not left exposed on the job site before they are sealed, and tighter-built structures prevent leaks and lower heating and cooling costs, said Wilson.

The National Association of Home Builders recognizes modular homes as one of the fastest growing segments of the residential building industry because of the [speed of construction](#) and ongoing energy and maintenance savings.

More Oregon developers see the possibilities for modular construction to counter the state's tremendous housing shortage. Prefabricated homes intended for use in Oregon are required to be built to the same standard as site-built homes, said Warren Jackson of Oregon's [Building Codes Division](#).

Oregon, Idaho and Washington have a reciprocal agreement that allows inspectors employed by the state that houses the home manufacturing facility to do the inspection on behalf of the state where the structure will be delivered, said Jackson.

Living 'Prefabulous'



John Brackett, left, and Robert Newton lives in a modern house in Newberg that is included in the new book, "Prefabulous for Everyone" by Sheri Koones. Gregory D. Specht

Newton and Brackett, who are in their 60s, said they didn't make any compromises with their factory-built house.

By spending time perfecting the design long before construction started, they could visualize the flow of the floor plan, furniture placement and how the space would feel. But more important, they met their goal to have a house in which most of it is used for daily living.

"The south-facing central core area is such a great living space with natural light coming in the windows," said Newton. "As we look at the view and surrounding area, it's a dream come true."

Newton and Brackett's modern house is profiled in the 224-page hardcover book, ["Prefabulous for Everyone"](#) by [Sheri Koones](#) (\$37, Gibbs Smith). Koones told The Oregonian/OregonLive that she featured the Newberg home because it is "very well designed with every amenity one would want."

Since 2005, Koones has written about types of prefabricated methods, including modular, structural insulated panels, panelized and kit built.

"There are wonderful prefab houses and [ADUs](#) going up in Oregon that are very impressive," said Koones, who lives in Greenwich, Connecticut. "With the high cost of labor and manufacturing, prefab is a perfect solution for Oregon."

Koones also sees factory-built homes replacing thousands of structures destroyed by fires and hurricanes. "There is a tremendous need for ingenuity in developing new and plentiful housing" built to ward off future disasters, she said.

Newton and Brackett said the biggest benefit to a well-designed, factory-built home was virtually watching its progress, from studs to finish work. After the house showed up in two parts, Newton said the installation and other work were a fraction of the activity typically seen during onsite construction.

Brackett appreciated not having to coordinate tradespeople's schedules and that all their design requests were executed. Since their first Thanksgiving in their home, Brackett said, "Everything has matched up."