

1 Woodside Bellevue, Tennessee

PUTTING CONTEMPORARY HOMES IN THE MIDST OF A STRONGLY TRADITIONAL SUBURBAN AREA IS A GAMBLE.

by Christine Kreyling

Project: Woodside, Bellevue, Tennessee

Architect: Artech Inc.—Moshen Malakouti, AIA, partner-in-charge; John Abernathy, AIA, Gaetano Fabris, Ni Li, Don Burke, design team; Mark Blumberg, models

Engineers: Steve Bridges (surveyor); Global Electric (electrical)

Consultants: Tony Ashburn (mechanical)

Contractor: Artech Inc.—Karl Dupre, project manager; Alan Ghavami, Jim Remagen, superintendents

Land development cost: \$375,000

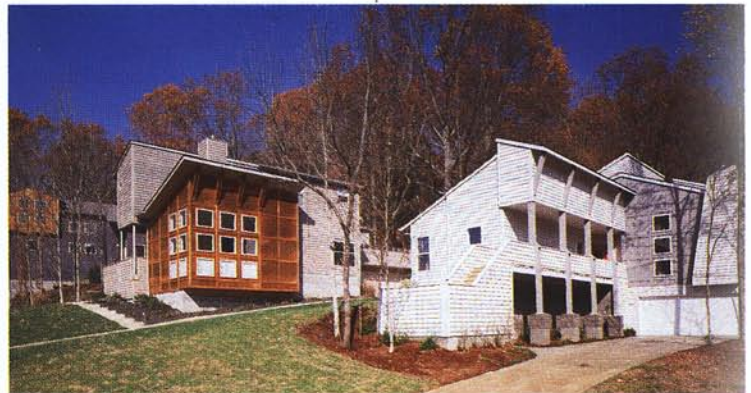
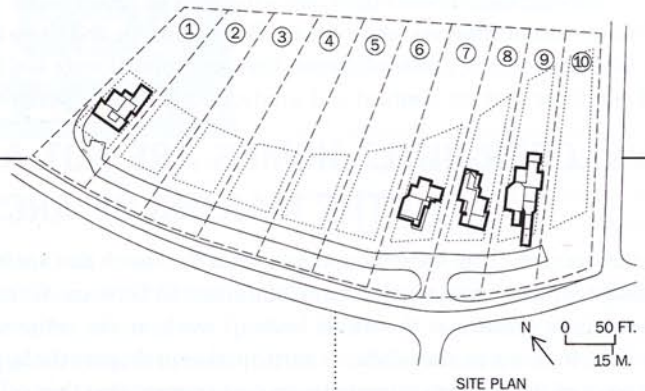
Cost per square foot: \$60–\$70

Bellevue, Tennessee, 10 miles southwest of Nashville, is a collection of subdivisions with names like Willow Pointe, Magnolia Place, Devon Close, and Aspen Heights. The houses range from 1960s split-levels with brick veneer, shutters, and the occasional vinyl Tuscan column, to the more recent generic cluster homes, with pseudo-Palladian windows and coach lamps suspended over the garage doors. In short, there is nothing architecturally striking in Bellevue—except Woodside.

This development-in-progress will ultimately include 10 houses tucked into the side of a wooded slope along a cul-de-sac. But the boldly contemporary lines of the three houses that have already been built make it clear that Woodside is not business as usual in Bellevue.

“We wanted to do something a little different, but not so different as to scare people off. After all, this is speculative building,” says designer and developer Moshen Malakouti, AIA. The exteriors of the three basic models contrast cypress lap siding with stained board and batten. Grids of square windows signal the main living spaces, while large eaves brackets translate the

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vocabulary of the bungalow to a modern idiom. The foundation blocks are laid in courses of three rough to one smooth, adding textural interest. “The rustic setting justifies the raw look of the materials,” Malakouti says. Some of the houses have towers to take advantage of the wooded views, and all models have a porch or a sundeck.

Malakouti’s company, Artech, was founded in 1991 to offer residential clients a design-build option. “Usually the contractor sees finished plans, and then he has to negotiate back and forth between the architect and the client. Serving as architect and contractor cuts down on the design and build time,” he

says. Artech’s seven-person staff includes full-time project managers and field supervisors who oversee a rotating crew of subcontractors.

Most of Artech’s work is the design and construction of traditional homes situated in Nashville’s gated communities, many of which have covenants that do not permit styles more recent than the 19th century. While Malakouti is comfortable with traditional elements, he prefers to go modern. His intention at Woodside is to make contemporary design available in an area where anything other than Colonials and Cape Cods must be custom-designed. The homes in the subdivision range from 2,500 to 3,000



Not the average Tennessee subdivision, Woodside has 10 lots and four basic home designs, which can be customized. Leaving the existing trees made construction more difficult and more costly. "Excavation subcontractors didn't like it," the architect says, but it helped give the houses, which are on narrow lots, greater privacy and a more established feel.



square feet and cost \$250,000 to \$275,000, which is competitive with others in the area.

Securing financial backing for the project, Artech's first as a developer, was not easy. "I've worked in Nashville, either as a builder or designer, for 17 years," Malakouti says. "I knew that some buyers would appreciate a more modern approach. And I wanted to be the first one in the area to reach these buyers." But being the first has disadvantages. Bankers were reluctant to gamble on Malakouti's niche market: young professionals willing to make the break from traditional suburban boxes. The company was required to submit models of each of the houses as well as comparative price studies.

Artech paid careful attention to the sloping topography, retaining view corridors to the surrounding hills. Knowing its buyers would be more ecologically minded than most, the company also tiptoed around existing trees during construction. Narrow lots (50 to 60 feet) necessitated designs that create privacy. Window placements are carefully considered, as is siting and landscaping. The floor plans of the three existing houses include a living room/great room, a separate dining room, a kitchen with a breakfast area, three bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths, a two-car garage, and bonus space that can serve as

an office or study. Public spaces are delineated by a shift in floor or ceiling level rather than actual walls. High-traffic areas are in free-flowing spaces, not separate hallways.

Artech is willing to customize the interiors to fit the needs of its buyers—an increasingly common practice in high-end developments. Jack and Rhonda Smart, Nashville natives who purchased one of the three houses already in place, worked with Malakouti to modify the basic floor plan to accommodate the needs of their children. The garage became a playroom for the kids, the bedrooms were expanded, and the bonus space upstairs was used for a homework area. "We got as close to a custom design as we could afford," Rhonda Smart says.

Another couple who bought one of Malakouti's homes, Ralph and Penny Mastrangelo, call themselves "determined modernists." They moved to the area three years ago and spent many of their weekends searching for a contemporary house. "We'd just about given up," Penny Mastrangelo remembers. "Then we found Woodside." ■

Sources

- Framing lumber:** Boise Cascade
- Roofing:** Tamko
- Vinyl windows:** Alenco
- Skylights:** Velux
- Doors:** Prendor
- Carpeting:** Karastan-Plesseau

