

HOME FRONT

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Home Stretch

SELL DIVISION

\$423,950

Average sales price this year of a 2,200-square-foot, single-family home with four bedrooms, 2½ baths, a family room and a two-car garage. Coldwell Banker surveyed 317 U.S. markets in the study.

6% Increase over last year's average in the study (\$401,767).

Colorado markets surveyed and the average sales prices of similarly sized houses there:

■ **Boulder**, \$536,000

■ **Highlands Ranch**, \$385,750

■ **Denver**, \$356,619

■ **Fort Collins**, \$271,745

■ **Colorado Springs**, \$217,000

\$1.8 million Average sales price of a similar home in Beverly Hills, Calif., the most expensive market.

\$132,333

Average sales price of a similar home in Minot, N.D., the least expensive market.

To find what a house similar to yours would cost in areas across the country and elsewhere in the world, go to <http://hpcl.coldwellbanker.com>



TIME FOR A MAKEOVER

Homeowners can learn how to transform a room within a day in HGTV's new series *24 Hour Design*. Hosted by designer Angelo Surnmelis, the show promises time-saving ideas, money-saving tips and creative solutions to design dilemmas. It premieres at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

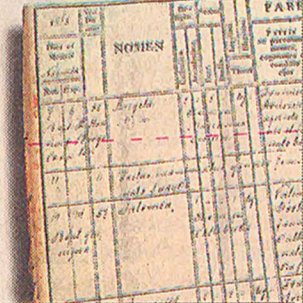
NAME GAME

73% of Americans say they are researching or interested in researching their family history.

S, B, M Three most common letters that begin surnames.

X, Q, U Three least common letters that begin surnames.

Ancestry.com

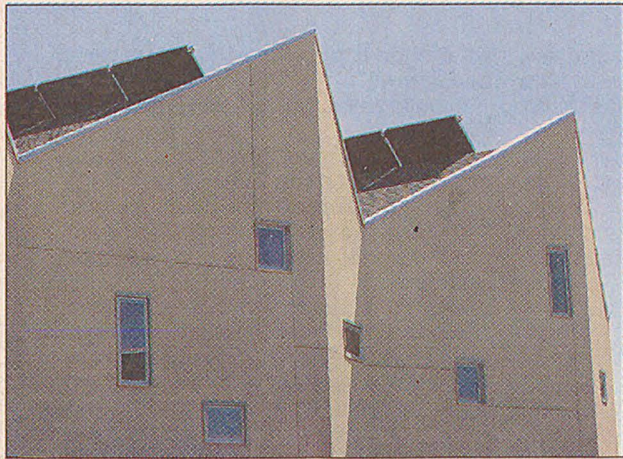


GO

- **What:** Log Home & Timber Frame Expo
- **When:** 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday
- **Where:** Merchandise Mart, 451 E. 58th Ave.
- **Admission:** \$12 general, free for kids 15 and under
- **Information:** www.logexpo.com or 1-888-LOG-EXPO



WWW.
RockyMountainNews.com /drmn/spotlight



Stucco-covered peaks hold solar panels up to the sun. The units provide hot water for everything from in-floor heating to bathing at Solar Village Prospect.



Resident Paul Mack rides through the courtyard at Solar Village Prospect. An architect and award-winning athlete, Mack is the kind of buyer that developer Alex Platt was hoping to attract to the project — well-educated and environmentally conscious.

Developer Alex Platt, left, and architect Michael Tavel spent three years designing and building Solar Village Prospect, a 2006 Architects' Choice Award winner.



A place in the sun

Condo complex lauded for funky design that emphasizes solar power

Story by Betsy Lehnndorff
Photos by Ellen Jaskol

Rocky Mountain News

LONGMONT — The cornfield across the highway looks as if it has been set ablaze each time the sun rises above the horizon. Rays pierce Mo Robbins' bright yellow bedroom window, stirring him awake on days he sleeps in.

"The sun reminds you of what a great day it's going to be," he says.

The sun's energy also drives down his gas and electrical bill. Mo and his wife, Teresa, will pay less than \$35 a month this winter to heat and light their 1,025-square-foot unit at Solar Village Prospect. Their building is designed to convert the sun into hot water for bathing, laundry and the dishes. It wrings electricity out of a bright day to light up the courtyard at night. And it heats the home in winter.

Located at Prospect New Town in Longmont, Solar Village is a 2006 Architects' Choice winner. A panel of judges from the *Rocky Mountain News*, the American Institute of Architects Denver chapter and the city and county of Denver chose it from more than 50 entries.

Architect Michael Tavel designed a complex that includes 16 residential units on top of 8,000 square feet of commercial space. Its sculptural walls and roofs harness the sun's power.

"How do you take this noisy location near a highway and make it a wonderful place to live?" Tavel asks. "The architecture on the inside is relaxed and informal. The outside is more serious and urban, as befits a Main Street building."

Tavel's client is Alex Platt, whom he met in 1994 when they worked for a Denver architectural firm. Nine years later, they teamed up to create Solar Village Prospect.

Completed in January, the 28,000-square-foot complex consists of two buildings where residential units range from 650 to 1,400 square feet.

"We identified the home buyer as very hip, somebody who was well educated or environmentally conscious and creative when it comes to ideas about living and work," says

Flip to SOLAR on 4E

Power surge

A few resources and products to check out to learn more about solar technology:

■ **2006 Denver Tour of Solar and Green-Built Homes**

This annual event, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 7, features 15 homes and businesses. It starts at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory Visitor Center, 15013 Denver West Parkway, Golden; \$20 per carload or \$35 a person for guided bus tour. 303-806-5317

■ **Experimental solar panel kit**
Learn the principles of photovoltaic cells, which convert sunlight into electricity; \$32.95, plus shipping, from www.sciencekit.com or call 1-800-828-7777.

■ **Solar workshops**
Classes are available at the Colorado Energy Science Center in Lakewood. To find out more, go to www.smartenergyliving.org or call 303-216-2026.

■ **Solar thermal collectors**
Placed out of sight on the roof, these panels can provide hot water for bathing, laundry and dishwashing; \$8,000 to \$9,000 at Industrial Solar Technology, 303-279-8108, www.industrialsolartech.com.

■ **Solar tax credits**
Learn how to get tax credits and rebates for your solar-power improvements, 6 to 8 p.m. Oct. 10 at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory Visitors Center in Golden. To register call 303-216-2026, ext. 150.

Autumn is vampire-hunting season



Dale Langford
HOME GROWN

Autumn is the season to check your evergreens. These trees and shrubs are important parts of our landscape, but they often host unwanted visitors, sometimes in vast numbers.

Aphids and spider mites delight in piercing tough green needles with their mouth parts. They suck out the plant's nutrients, causing minor to

major damage. While a few of them will cause only small problems, the big crunch comes when the few multiply to thousands seemingly overnight.

Damage shows up when usually healthy green areas turn dull; then they become mottled yellow or brown. As these little vampires keep draining the plants' "blood," some-

thing has to give.

On roses and other broad-leaved plants, similar damage shows up earlier in the season. On evergreens, by the time you see the yellowing, the critters have been at work for some time.

The easiest and surest way to test for these pests is to shake a couple of branches over a white piece of paper.

Spider mites look like spots of moving dust. Don't let their minute size fool you — 100,000 of them can suck out a lot of juice, each pulling several times its body weight every day.

The most common types of aphids are a semitransparent green about the size of a small typed letter "O."

Flip to HOME on 4E

Solar: Styles a blend of old, new

Continued from 1E
Platt, 43, of Boulder. "They could walk to a cafe for a cup of coffee — they didn't have to drive."

The two buildings form a horseshoe around a south-facing courtyard at U.S. 287 and Tenacity Drive, presenting several distinctly different facades.

The complex is a landmark. To the east, Robbins' bright yellow bedroom window and several other openings pop out of a white stucco wall. The south side is a recessed stack of housing units, broken up by terraces, galvanized steel stairways and awnings made of iridescent photovoltaic solar panels. The north side is mostly brick, lending a comforting, hometown feel for pedestrians strolling to shops and restaurants.

"The brick helps set the scene," Tavel says. "It also helps to absorb the sounds of the traffic and makes you feel very anchored and solid."

A courtyard elevator makes most of the units wheelchair-accessible, and most open out onto terraces. Others have private balconies for umbrella-shaded tables and chairs.

"They can set out pots of plants and herbs to personalize the space," says Tavel, 44. "It's a type of space designed to make the owners want to come out and add more of themselves to it."

Although the complex is modernist in style, architectural details hint at the good old days. Some units have brick or old-fashioned clapboard siding. Others feature double-hung windows or built-in awnings. In reality, though, these details are part of an earth-friendly plan. The low-maintenance clapboard is made of concrete and recycled materials; the brick stores heat from the sun; the double-hung windows provide high-tech insulation; and the awnings give shade.

Even some of the roofs do double duty: Their concealed solar hot water panels generate heating and hot water year-round.

Mo and Teresa Robbins were the first to move in this spring. They live with their cat, Zamora, in a studio above the parking garage. Their first floor consists of an open living area and kitchen, with a small bathroom tucked away in the back. The kitchen is equipped with energy-efficient stainless steel appliances. Countertops are covered with granite tiles instead of slabs, and the cabinets are made of low-toxic panels. But looks count — the doors are maple.

The second level, an open sleeping loft up a flight of exposed stairs, is cooled during the summer with an energy-efficient air conditioner.

Some units are more conventional. Several come with the open kitchen and living area but offer more privacy. A hallway leads to a master suite and other bedrooms as well as a powder room and storage space, all concealed behind old-fashioned, five-panel doors that were in vogue in the 1930s and '40s.

Even the paints, finishes and glues were chosen carefully. They are nontoxic and almost odorless, and the molding is milled out of wood scraps jointed together.

"The most beautiful aspect of the building in my mind is the sense of community that it has created," Platt says. "In the courtyard, homeowners can interact with each other when they walk from their car to their unit."

"They can sit on the benches, stairs or stoops and talk to their neighbors."

"It's an example of what environmentally sensitive, urban living may be like in the future," Tavel says. "The trend here is toward living in urban, mixed-use neighborhoods, where people get out of their cars, walk to work and have a stronger sense of community."

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Along a busy highway, a bright-yellow window designed by architect Michael Tavel pops out of the white stucco walls shaped like mountains.



Solar panels serve as permanent awnings above south-facing windows. The panels from Sun Electric Systems also generate

enough electricity to illuminate the residential courtyard at night. Each opalescent panel costs about \$1,000, not including installation.

The details

■ **What:** Solar Village Prospect, a residential and commercial complex
■ **Where:** Prospect New Town, U.S. 287 and Tenacity Drive, Longmont

■ **Architect:** Michael Tavel of Michael Tavel Architects, Denver
■ **Developer:** Alex Platt of Solar Village, Boulder
■ **Size:** 8,000 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor; 20,000 square feet of living space

■ **Cost:** The most expensive unit is \$350,000.
■ **Other awards:** A sustainability award from the Denver chapter of the American Institute of Architects; design award from the Colorado Renewable Energy Society.

■ **More information:** www.solarvillage.life.com

Home: Woolly aphid looks like tuft of cotton

Continued from 1E
Sometimes evergreen trees host black aphids, which are several times larger than the green variety. One aphid that won't shake out is the woolly type, but it's easy to see it sticking to the needles, looking like a little tuft of cotton. Underneath is a siphoning expert with an unquenchable appetite.

Still another that won't fall out is called a scale. This insect also is easy to see when attached to the needles. Scales, about the same size as aphids, are sucking insects covered with shields, not unlike turtle shells and usually gray-white in color.

Control for all these troublemakers is easy but effective. First, water-scrub the plants

with as strong a spray as your hose will put out. This should do the job if there are only a few pests (except for scales and woolly aphids). Another scrubbing 10 days later will catch any new ones that have hatched.

If you see lots of woolly aphids or scale or had a paper full of "dropouts," consider spraying with a control. Malathion works well with a short residual; most of it will be neutralized in a day or so. While it won't do much to control hatching eggs, it will get nearly all the adults that weren't knocked off by water scrubbing.

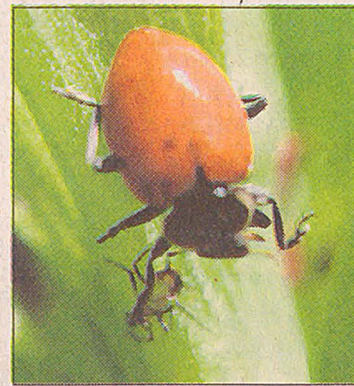
It will get most of the woolly aphids and some of the scale insects if you add a quarter-teaspoon of dish detergent for each gal-

lon of spray. This will help the water to get past cottony surfaces and shell-like casings.

Don't confuse the natural white, sugar-like grains of rosin on the needles of foxtail or bristlecone pines with scale. Rosin is brittle and hard, while scale can be easily pried off and will be moist when crushed.

If this winter is especially dry, like most previous ones, plan to water your evergreens. A simple flooding of the area under the longest lower branches when the ground isn't heavily frozen will help you enjoy your evergreens for many years to come.

Dale Langford is an area lawn and garden specialist.



A lady bug eats a green aphid. Another way to control aphids is to water-scrub plants twice in 10 days or spray malathion.

Roots at heart of planting success

Dig into their many vital roles as days get cooler

By Nancy O'Donnell
ALBANY TIMES UNION

Fall is for planting, and for good reason. It has everything to do with those underground, unsung heroes of the plant kingdom—roots.

Roots have some important responsibilities: They anchor the plant firmly in the soil and have an uncanny ability to extract water and minerals from the soil.

But roots also perform some other vital functions. Take their ability to store food. Some roots store food in such excess that they are actually harvested for our dinner table; potatoes, turnips, radishes and carrots to name a few.

Then there are perennial plants such as trees, shrubs and flowers whose roots have stockpiled food from the last growing season.

As the days lengthen and warm up in the spring, dormancy begins to break and plants need a supply of food to nourish them before they are fully awake. Roots to the rescue.

Roots also lend humankind a helping hand. Some plants, such as the willow, have the ability to absorb loads of water. They are often planted in wet areas to help control excess surface water. Other plants have such an extensive root system they are called upon to help curtail soil erosion.

Throughout the life of the plant, its roots are continually growing and dying. As they grow, they work themselves through the soil, aerating as they go. As parts die, they add to the organic matter of the soil, feeding the tiny microorganisms that aid in the decay of plant debris. So, not only are they vital to plants, but they're vital to the soil and the tiny organisms that live in it.

Plants have three types of roots: tap, fibrous and adventitious.

Taprooted plants have one main root that grows down deep into the soil; smaller roots branch off from that root. Examples of plants with taproots include carrots and dandelions.

Transplanting taprooted plants is difficult. It's best to either direct seed or transplant when the plant is very young, before a significant root has formed. The positive side is since this root grows down deep into the cooler, moister layers of soil, the plant has a good drought tolerance.

Fibrous roots are the most common. Fibrous rooted plants have a root system that branches and rebranches (no single main root) and tends to lie closer to the soil surface. Plants with this type of root system aren't as drought-hardy but are much easier to transplant even when mature. Examples include peppers, maples and Black-eyed Susans.

Adventitious or aerial roots can be found most often on vines such as English ivy. Their job is simply to help the vine adhere as it climbs; they do not perform typical root duties. If you were to dig below ground, at the vine's crown you would find a fibrous root system.

Regardless of the type of root, parts are parts. If you could envision a root, zoom in to the tip area. This is the point from which the root grows outward. If you have ever "root pruned," a tree or shrub with a fibrous root system prior to transplanting, you essentially cut off the growing tips of the roots (similar to pinching the ends of branches to make them fuller).

As a result, the smaller side roots grow and re-branch, forming a smaller, denser root ball that makes transplanting easier and more successful.

Look even closer and you'll find tiny, fine roots, called root hairs, lining tap roots and fibrous roots. It's through these root hairs that the root absorbs minerals and water.

It's important when transplanting not to allow the roots to become exposed to the drying effects of the sun and wind. These fine root hairs dry out the fastest; when they do, the absorbing power of the associated root is diminished until new root hairs grow.

Cooler soil temperatures are a favorite growing condition of roots, thus, fall is often a good time to plant.