



January 1997  
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## Just Like a Big House

Garden apartments have had their days. The new prototype looks like a single family home - without breezeways, parking lots or balconies on the facade. The single family look helps obtain approvals in communities opposed to multifamily. All units at Mapleshade have two-car garages and two-bedrooms. Unit shown (above) is 1,289 sq.ft. Mapleshade may have a HUD-insured loan, but it is a luxury development in every sense. The Clubhouse incorporates a business center. Apartment features include a "computer center"; closed circuit TV viewing of guests; and 24-hour monitored alarms.

Given that consumers would rather live in homes than apartment projects, developers are beginning to offer a new generation of apartments - "Big Houses" - that will allow renters to reside in a home-like environment. "What's interesting about the Big House is that it is revolutionary, like the garden apartments were when first introduced 25 years ago," contends designer Mark Humphreys, president, Humphreys & Partners Architecture, Dallas. The prototype of Humphrey's Big House designs, the Mapleshade Residences consists of 65'X110' two-story buildings with a single-family elevation on both ends facing the curbs or thoroughfares. these elevations are complete with front entrances, fireplaces and garages. Mainstays of garden apartments such as parking lots, balcony rows and breezeways are totally eliminated.

The concept began when Mapleshade developer Terry Lewis required a two-car attached garage for every unit. Said Humphreys, "We designed it for the garage and noticed that it began looking like a house, so we pursued it further. We played up one entrance, making it look like the entrance to the house. The elevation has a garage, and even a dormer on the roof." The scale is also reduced. Said Lewis, "Above the garage, there is only one story instead of four stories hovering over you."

A 221(d)(4) HUD-insured project, Mapleshade consists entirely of two-bedroom units because Lewis wanted to maximize use on the limited site. Each building has six units but the prototype allows up to eight. Each half of the building houses one unit over the garage and two nearly identical stacked units. The second story units are accessed by stairs. Leasing, which began last May, has proceeded at about 22 units a month, said Lewis, president, Devon/DPC Development Consultants, Coppell, Texas. Lewis estimates about 40 percent of renters are move-downs or people who are waiting to build a house. The main disadvantage of the design, said Lewis, is the relatively small building size, which gives rise to a larger perimeter area per square foot of livable area. "It is a little more expensive to build. But you have more green area, and we chose to put the money in the landscaping." Indeed, Lewis likes the winding roads which give the feel of a "European village."

According to Humphreys, the Big House design offers a comfortable density of 15 units per acre and may cost no more to build than apartments with garages. The footprint is small enough to fall below the building requirements for sprinklers under all three major codes, including BOCA. At Mapleshade, \$200,000 accrued from savings on sprinklers. With the plumbing and room stacks, the prototype also cost \$5 to \$6 less than townhomes, he estimated.

At press time, Humphreys has more than 10 of these designs under construction from Florida to Nebraska, with more in the planning. "So far, almost every single client has a site that is having difficulty being approved for multi-family," said Humphreys, noting that the single family look can help obtain approvals in communities opposed to multifamily. Meanwhile, Lewis is closing another HUD-insured loan in Louisville, Texas, and is anticipating another Big House: "I wouldn't use this design in downtown Dallas, but it is good in areas with garden apartments."

Source: Multi-Housing News

Date: January 1997

### About Humphreys & Partners Architects

Humphreys & Partners Architects, L.P. is a Dallas-based, full service architectural firm specializing in the multi-family housing market. The firm is currently designing hi-rise, mid-rise, luxury, moderate, senior, student, mixed-use, tax credit, and low-income multifamily projects in markets across the country. The firm also has considerable expertise in the design of hotels and single family housing.

Humphreys & Partners Architects, L.P. has won numerous local and national awards, including Pillars of the Industry, Best in American Living, Builder's Choice, Gold Nugget and Aurora.