



Prefab: ***Panelized vs. Modular***

People often ask us why we prefabricate our houses as panels rather than in large modules. Let's first be sure we're clear on what we're talking about. In both modular and panelized prefabrication, a large part of the house is built in a factory.

In modular construction, whole portions of the house are built as fully-finished volumes, which are then trucked to the building site and lifted onto a pre-built foundation. You've probably seen such housing modules rolling down the highway, with flashing lights warning you of "Wide Load."

In panelized construction, only the exterior shell of the house is pre-built in the factory (interior and exterior finishes are added later), and that shell is broken down into a series of flat panels dimensioned so that they can be shipped on a conventional flat-bed truck, then assembled on a built foundation.

Modular and panelized construction address two problems presented by conventional "stick-built" construction: it's difficult to build accurately when you must cut and assemble every piece of the house on-site, and building that way takes a great deal of time. Prefabrication is more accurate and it's faster. So again: Why do we panelize?

Spatial Variety

One of the hallmarks of our houses is their spatial variety. Some spaces are intimate, others are expansive. Some are standard height, others soar up to two stories. Some spaces have exterior walls that are mostly windows and sliding doors, others are enclosed by conventional walls. Modular construction makes this variety difficult to achieve.

Because modules must be trucked down highways, their maximum width is limited; and often this width is too big for an intimate space, and too small for an expansive one. The same trucking restrictions constrain the height of modules: spaces will tend to be either one module tall, or two. And each module must be a "box" with enough structural strength to support itself during transport; but fully open exterior walls (window walls) mean that one or more sides of that "box" will be absent requiring the use temporary materials for the shipping process.

Shipping Efficiency

When a prefab house is trucked to the site in panels, the panels can be stacked atop each other on the truck — "flat-packed" — so a lot of material can be delivered in each shipment. With a module, you



are in effect shipping a great volume of air down the highway. We think panels are a more efficient way to transport a prefab home.

Build Anywhere

From the beginning days of Turkel Design, we wanted to be able to build our homes virtually anywhere: in cities and suburbs, on sites near town or out in the wilderness, anywhere worldwide. The sheer size of house-modules prevents them from being shipped down the narrow or steep roads that lead to remote sites. And modules are subject to damage if they are shipped over long distances— from wind and rain and sheer roadway vibration. Panels avoid both these problems. They let us build your home on any site that suits your dreams.

Also, for a number of reasons modular prefab homes are not permitted in all jurisdictions. The most common issue is the inability of a local building inspector to examine a finished structure. Panelized prefab homes are not subject to these restrictions given that the open panels that we ship and erect can be easily inspected.

Contact us

For more information on any of the general topics listed below, please visit our [FAQ page](#). If you'd like to speak with us about your specific project, please reach out to us at info@turkeldesign.com or at 617.868.1867.

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