

Modular homes: Full-size dwellings in just 6 hours

Builder locates his niche on Island

BY ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

While the modular construction movement has been slow to catch on here, one builder has carved out a niche using modular technology for building group homes.

The four quadrants that make up the 3,200-square-foot building on Faber Street, Port Richmond, went up in just six hours, leaving builder Robert Germano's crews to finish the siding, roofing and interior spaces over the next couple of months.

The home, which is one of several factory-built group residences developed by Germano at other Island locations, was trucked in sections from a factory in Pennsylvania. Two pairs of boxes were stacked, joined together down the middle and set, with plumbing lines and interior partitions in place, on a poured concrete foundation.

"When you compare modular construction versus conventional, sometimes modular can be more costly," said Germano. "But the real savings is in time. These are capital-intense projects and if I can save two months, that savings gets passed along to the user."

Germano intends to lease the seven-bedroom house to the group home operator, the Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development. The building

should be ready for occupancy by November, he said.

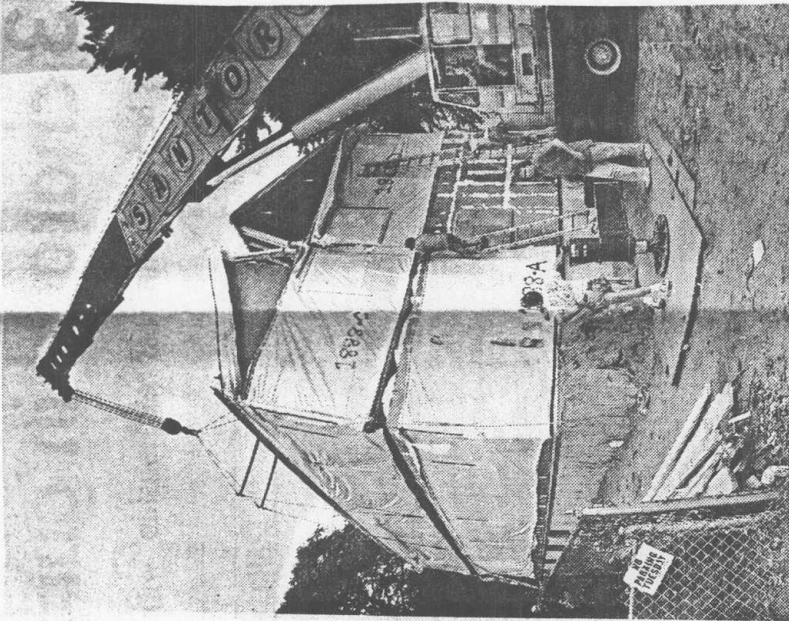
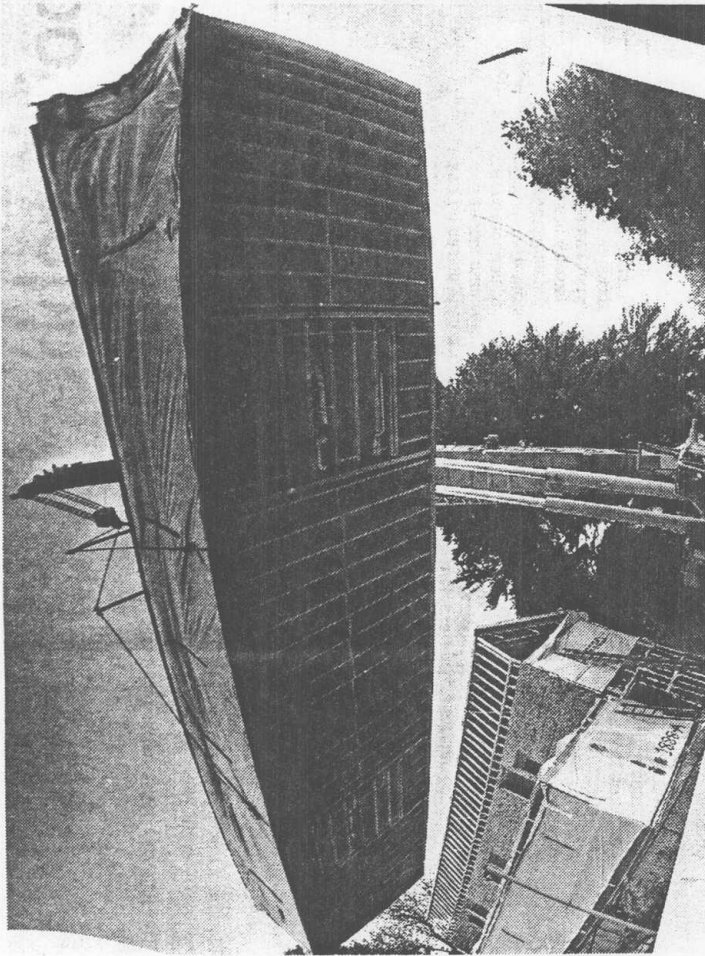
Germano worked closely on the design with state engineers to determine the needs of occupants and the special features and amenities they require. He then placed the order at the factory, and about four months later, the building

sections, complete with windows and doorways, were delivered to the site.

In those four months Germano said he did not have to pay installments on a construction loan, which is a substantial savings in itself.

Germano estimates the cost of constructing the Faber Street residence at about \$140 a square foot, or \$448,000 exclusive of land.

"To build a building of that size conventionally, it would take at least six months," he said. "With modular, you cut that time in half."



ADVANCE PHOTOS/TONY CARAMANITE

This modular residential building in Port Richmond was assembled in about six hours with the help of a crane to stack the units on top of each other.