

## Phoenix Real Estate -

### Definitions of Home Styles Can Be Confusing



These homes in Troon North in Scottsdale, Arizona are usually marketed as townhouses although some have been marketed as patio homes. They could also be described as twin homes.

People who research homes for sale online may find that they come across confusing terms to describe a house.

#### Most common home types listed for sale in the Phoenix area

- 83.8% Single family residences
- 5.8% Condominiums
- 5.4% Townhouses or townhomes
- 2.5% Manufactured homes
- 1.4% Patio homes
- 0.6% Twin homes or gemini homes
- 0.3% Lofts
- 0.1% Modular homes

What are the differences between townhouses and patio homes? What is a gemini? And why aren't duplexes on this list? Before you go on to see the definitions, examples, and photos, there are three things you must know:

1. The Arizona Regional Multiple Listing Service ( ARMLS ) does not have definitions for townhouses, patio homes, twin homes or for any other home type, and there are really no legal definitions for different types of houses in Arizona. The Maricopa County Assessor, for example, lumps several these home types into the same category.
2. It is not uncommon to see the identical home marketed as a townhouse by one person and as a patio home by another, or as a patio home by one person and as a twin by another.
3. The definitions of home types in Arizona may be completely different in other parts of the country!

## Single Family Residences - What is a Single Family Residence?



1970s single family residence in McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale, Arizona.

A single family residence, or single family home, is the easiest to define in Arizona. Single family residences are detached homes, usually with a front and back yard, driveway, and attached carport or garage.

### Single Family Residence - Pros

- A single family residence offers greater privacy, no common walls, less intruding noise from neighbors
- Usually includes a yard which may include enough space for a lawn, swimming pool, RV parking, horse stables or other amenities
- May be able to be expanded
- Garages are common in newer single family residences
- May have a homeowners' association and CC&Rs (Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions)

### Single Family Residence - Cons

- A more expensive home type
- All maintenance on a single family residence is homeowner's responsibility
- May have a homeowners' association and CC&Rs

## **Condominiums - What is a Condominium?**



Condominiums at Grayhawk in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Condominiums, or condos, are essentially apartments that are individually owned.

### **Condominiums - Pros**

- Condominiums are generally less expensive than single family homes
- You may be able to afford to live in a more expensive neighborhood
- Easy lifestyle – the condominium homeowners association often covers roof replacement, exterior maintenance, common area maintenance, and other expenses
- Good “lock and leave” vacation homes
- Condominiums often include amenities such as a community pool

### **Condominiums - Cons**

- Noise from neighbors, including those above and below your unit
- Homeowners’ association fees and politics, and CC&R restrictions
- Parking at condominiums is often in a common area not attached to the home
- No yard
- Some condo buildings may have stairs

## **Townhome/Town House - What is a Townhome or Townhouse?**



Typical 1960s era townhomes in Scottsdale, Arizona, 2-story homes lined up in a row, sharing side walls, with no neighbors above or below. Usually, the living area is downstairs and the bedrooms upstairs.

The term “townhouse” has become a bit of a catch-all term in Arizona to refer to any home that shares a building with other units, particularly if there are no other units above or below. Most townhouses or townhomes in the Phoenix area are multiple story dwellings. Having said that though, many Realtors place an apartment style condo in to the Townhouse style category on a listing just because it is in a 2 storey building attached to other units.

### **Townhome/Townhouse - Pros**

- Less expensive than single family homes
- No neighbors above or below.
- Often has a small fenced yard
- Low maintenance lifestyle – HOA may cover roof repair and replacement, exterior maintenance, common area maintenance, and other expenses
- Often includes amenities such as a community pool

### **Townhome/Townhouse - Cons**

- Noise from neighbors through shared walls
- Homeowners’ association fees and politics, and CC&R restrictions
- A townhome or townhouse will typically have a small yard or no yard
- Might have common stairwells

# Manufactured Home - What is a Manufactured Home or Mobile Home?



Double-wide manufactured home

Manufactured homes are built in a factory and installed on the home site. They must meet U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) construction requirements. If built before the 1976 HUD Code, they are commonly called mobile homes.

## Manufactured Homes or Mobile Homes - Pros

- Manufactured or mobile homes are less expensive than single family homes
- Quick construction

## Manufactured Homes or Mobile Homes - Cons

- Some communities do not allow manufactured or mobile homes

So what's a modular home? Modular homes are factory-built and installed on-site, like manufactured homes. Modular homes meet local building codes while manufactured homes meet federal HUD design and construction requirements. Extremely few homes are marketed as modular homes in the Phoenix area, and many of those are in fact manufactured homes.

## Patio Home - What is a Patio Home?



1970s era patio homes in Scottsdale, Arizona with patios overlooking the common area. Homes in this subdivision are sometimes listed as townhouses.

Patio homes in Arizona were traditionally 1-story homes that shared at least one side wall and had a back patio but not necessarily a backyard.

Patio homes are usually built with 2, 3 or 4 homes in each building instead of the continuous row of homes common with townhouses.

Today in Arizona, about 85 percent of homes listed as patio homes are single level homes.

### **Patio Homes - Pros**

- A patio home is usually less expensive than a single family home
- Not as crowded (dense) as townhomes or condominiums
- No neighbors above or below
- Often only one shared wall
- A patio home affords an easy lifestyle – HOA often covers roof replacement, exterior maintenance, landscape maintenance, common area maintenance, and other expenses
- Ideal for “lock and leave” vacation homes
- No stairs and low maintenance make patio homes popular with seniors
- Commonly includes amenities such as a community pool

### **Patio Homes - Cons**

- Noise from neighbors through the shared wall or walls
- Homeowners’ association fees and politics, and CC&R restrictions
- Less common than townhouses or condominiums, so the selection of patio homes may be small
- No yard, just a patio overlooking a common area.

# Duplex, Gemini ,or Twin Home - What is a Duplex ,Gemini, or Twin Home?



A classic Sun City, Arizona duplex made up of two twin or gemini homes.

For the Arizona real estate industry and the Maricopa County Assessor, a duplex is a building with 2 units in it. If you own a duplex, you own an entire building that has 2 units in it. Similarly, if you own a 4-plex, you own an entire building that has 4 units in it.

The real estate industry in Arizona calls a single unit within a duplex a “gemini” or “twin” home. Nevertheless, most people who are not real estate professionals call both the single unit and the entire building a duplex.

## Duplex, Gemini or Twin Home - Pros

- Less expensive than single family homes
- Only one shared wall

## Duplex, Gemini or Twin Home - Cons

- Noise from your neighbor
- Owners of twin homes need to coordinate exterior and roof maintenance, if home is not part of a larger HOA that covers those expenses
- Duplexes have small yards or no yard
- Less common than townhouses or condominiums so the selection of gemini homes may be small

## Loft - What is a Loft?



Luxury lofts near downtown Scottsdale, Arizona.

Lofts are a type of condominium that originated when warehouses back East were converted into apartments and condominiums. Here are some characteristics you might see in lofts; located near downtown, very high ceilings (sometimes 20-foot tall), exposed pipes and ducts in the ceiling, a great room floor plan, floor to ceiling windows, exposed interior brick, stained cement floors even in luxury homes, metal stairs and handrails, stainless steel kitchen appliances, and modern/contemporary furnishings.

### Lofts - Pros

- Often located near downtown
- High ceilings, open and airy
- Modern design

### Lofts - Cons

- Lofts tend to be more expensive than condos
- Homeowners' association fees and politics, and CC&R restrictions
- No yard

## Defining Home Types in the Phoenix Area



These homes in McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale are usually listed as patio homes although some have been described as townhouses or twin homes.

The most important thing to know about the different types of homes that are available in the greater Phoenix area is that it is not important how a seller refers to a home, or how a listing defines any particular home. What matters is that you, as the buyer, know what the critical questions are to ask about the home style:

### Ask Questions About the Home

1. How many square feet of living space is there in the home?
2. Is there a yard? What are the dimensions?
3. Is it a detached home, or are there common walls?
4. How many levels does the home have?
5. Which rooms are on each level if there's more than one?
6. Is there a garage attached to the home?
7. How close are the nearest neighbors?
8. Is there a Homeowners' Association? Can you get a copy of the CC&Rs for review?
9. Are any areas, like outside stairwells, parking, or storage areas shared with another home?
10. Are there common areas in the community, or areas of the specific home, that are maintained by the community?

With the answers to these questions, you know you'll have a clear understanding of the relationship of the home to the neighbors and the community, no matter what home style the seller or agent chooses to use as a descriptor. Then you can go on to find out all the other details about the home, like taxes, nearby schools, energy efficiency, etc.