

REBECCA S. GRANT/THE WORLD-HERALD  
**Demolition crews work on the north side of the old Union Pacific building. The company's new headquarters, across Dodge Street, is visible in the background.**

Crews with Omaha's Anderson Excavating are removing a floor at a time from the 14-story building.

On the Capitol Avenue side of the building, the outside skin has been

finished by the end of February. Townsend plans an open house for the project in March.

Once the sales office is open, he said, he expects sales of the condominiums to pick up. There are currently 107 reservations for the 270 condos in the project, he said.

Strawhecker doesn't expect the nation's credit crunch to hurt sales.

"I don't think it's going to be a problem for us," he said, adding that "some

potential buyers in the \$200,000 range may not be able to qualify for a loan today that they could have yesterday."

However, he said, "We're a good two to two and a half years away from delivering the units, and the economic landscape will be entirely different then."

Strawhecker said one good side of the credit crunch is that it has dissuaded potential rivals from entering the market.

homebuyers. Terry said, he would like to see a tax credit of several thousand dollars for homebuyers.

People want to buy houses right now, he said, but they're worried about being able to sell their current homes. The tax credits would be intended to nudge wary buyers into making the leap, helping both the housing sector and related businesses.

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# Looking for a nice house? Watanabe mansion for sale

By CHRISTINE LAUVE  
 WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Watanabe mansion, one of Omaha's largest and most notable homes, is for sale.

NP Dodge & Jeff Rensch, the listing agent for the Regency mansion at 9800 Harney Parkway South, said Tuesday that he could disclose the sale price only to legitimate buyers.

"It's priced to sell," Rensch said. "It's a great value for somebody."

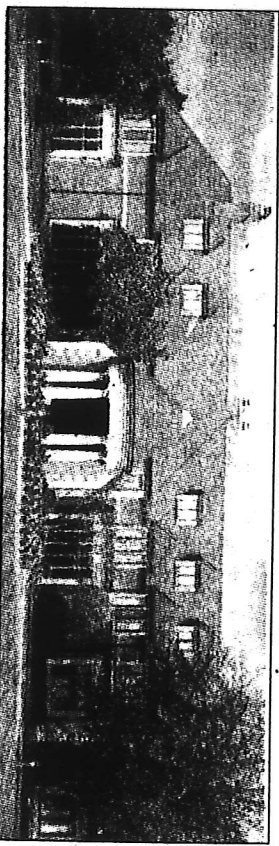
The home of philanthropist Terry Watanabe, former owner of Oriental Trading Co., has an assessed valuation of \$4,989,600,

according to the Douglas County assessor's Web site.

Watanabe currently is living in the home and plans to maintain another residence in Omaha, Rensch said. Rensch declined to specify whether Watanabe has purchased another home.

Rensch said the mansion's finished space is now 20,125 square feet, which is slightly more than the assessor's site shows.

The brick, limestone and slate mansion sits on 4.05 acres and features nine bedrooms, 18 bathrooms, a gourmet kitchen, a custom wine cellar, a whole-house energy management system and



The brick, limestone and slate Watanabe mansion sits on 4.05 acres and has nine bedrooms, 18 baths, a gourmet kitchen, a custom wine cellar and a three-story elevator.

a three-story elevator. The lower level features a modern exercise facility and health spa with sunken Jacuzzi, steam room, dry sauna and massage room.

The property also includes an

indoor and outdoor pool and tennis courts.

"It's an absolutely fabulous home in every way, and it's been impeccably maintained," Rensch said.

Because of the unusual scope

of the home, it is not being listed in the multiple listing service — a routine way of advertising residential property, Rensch said. He said he has shown the home to "a couple families" in the past

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company of \$12.8 billion, or \$59.61 a share. — AP

# Wells' Dairy sells Omaha yogurt plant

By CHET MULLIN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Wells' Dairy has sold its Omaha yogurt plant at 72nd and J Streets to Grupo LaLa, a firm with headquarters in Torreon, Mexico.

Wells' spokesman Dave Smetter said LaLa will continue to operate the plant and is offering positions to all 115 employees.

Smetter said the deal is expected to close by the end of the month. He declined to disclose the financial terms.

Last year, Wells' sold its 180-employee milk culture plant in Le Mars, Iowa, to Dean Foods.

The latest deal gets Le Mars-based Wells' out of the fresh and cultured dairy business.

Smetter said the 95-year-old company would focus on its core business of making ice cream and frozen novelties and some food service items.

He said both Dean Foods and LaLa can continue to use the Blue Bunny name on their products for a transition period.

Smetter said Dean Foods has a license to use the Blue Bunny name for up to two years and LaLa for up to four years.

tenberry suggested giving people additional ways to borrow from their retirement savings to purchase a new house.

Sens. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., and Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, both called for greater federal investment in roads, highways and bridges.

Nelson was pointing favorably to a slew of options — tax rebates, increased federal spending, business tax relief and more money sent to state governments, particularly in the form of federal grants to speed up public works projects.

Rep. Adrian Smith, R-Neb., said he favors the rebates and various reductions in taxes.

Others were cautioning against an overreaction by the

said the federal government has been running up massive amounts of debt in recent years and questioned whether borrowing more to hand out checks is the way to go.

"This isn't free money," Hagel said.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, also was having trouble with tax rebates and said he would rather make previous tax cuts permanent.

He compared issuing rebates to having thousands of helicopters flying over America, dumping out a million dollars each.

"You can't spend your way into prosperity," King said.

Bloomberg News contributed to this report.

## Mansion: Sale price will be available to legitimate buyers only

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few weeks.

"We are right now in the process of marketing it privately and directly to families that we have targeted," Rensch said.

He has, however, established a Web site — [www.9800harney.com](http://www.9800harney.com) — with pictures and listed features.

Godfather's Pizza founder Willy Theisen built the mansion in 1983. At that time, a contractor estimated that 4,000 pounds of copper went into the flashing, gutters and downspouts.

In April 1995, Theisen sold the property for \$1.8 million to Watanabe, who ran Oriental Trading Co., which markets party supplies, toys, home

décor items and giftware. On Halloween 2000, Watanabe retired from the company, which was founded by his late father, Harry.

The home has been part of a Halloween tradition in Omaha. Several thousand parents and children have flocked to the mansion each Halloween, when Watanabe would hand out trick-or-treat goodies.

A mansion expert hired in 2004 by the county to rank the desirability of Omaha-area mansions put the Watanabe house at the top of its list. At that time, its main living space was 12 times as large as the average Douglas County house.

The commercial capabilities

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