

# Building for a Better Lifestyle



← LIFESTYLE HOMES HAS CREATED THE SUNSMART ENERGY INITIATIVE AS THEIR WAY OF MOVING TOWARD THE GOAL OF BUILDING ZERO ENERGY HOMES.

↓ HERS 60 LIFESTYLE SUNSMART(SM) HOMES ARE CRAFTED THROUGH AN EXCLUSIVE COMBINATION OF BETTER BUILDING TECHNIQUES AND HIGHER-PERFORMANCE COMPONENTS THAT DELIVER DURABILITY AND SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE ELECTRICAL BILLS.



*Florida builder Lifestyle Homes is a pioneer in building affordable Net Zero Energy homes.*

By KIM SINGLETARY

**T**hey call it the Space Coast — an area 72 miles long that spreads down the east coast of Florida, encompassing the closest beaches to Orlando and world-class shopping, resorts and hotels, and of course the Kennedy Space Center. But while the last space shuttle launched from Kennedy on July 8, 2010, area builder LifeStyle Homes is just beginning its journey into the “final frontier” of home building — truly affordable Net Zero Energy homes.

Formed in 1984 and still a family-owned company,

LifeStyle Homes began looking to energy efficient building for sustainability — sustaining business in a tough economy. “In 2008, we asked ourselves what it would be like for us if the recession turned out to be deeper and longer than anyone was predicting at the time,” said Jake Luhn, CEO, LifeStyle Homes. “In a worst case scenario, we realized we might find ourselves trying to sell full priced new homes against our own homes, sold a few years before, now back on the market as heavily discounted re-sales. It’s not too hard to say our new homes are better than another builder’s new homes, but selling against a discounted version of ourselves looked pretty sticky.”

The answer they found was to offer a home that may look the same as others, but inside it could perform like no other, and for the same price. To accomplish this feat, the builder enlisted the help of

➔ THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN LIFESTYLE HOMES AND THE FLORIDA SOLAR ENERGY CENTER RESULTED IN THE HERS 60 LIFESTYLE SUNSMART (SM) HOMES. THESE HOMES ARE CRAFTED THROUGH AN EXCLUSIVE COMBINATION OF BETTER BUILDING TECHNIQUES AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPONENTS.

➔ LIFESTYLE HOMES CREATED THEIR FIRST NET ZERO ENERGY HOME — THE ST. CROIX SALES MODEL HOME IN TRALEE BAY ESTATES, A NEIGHBORHOOD WITHIN THE CAPRON RIDGE MASTER PLANNED COMMUNITY IN MELBOURNE, FLA.

➔ PROVIDING A WIDE RANGE OF SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED HOME DESIGNS, LIFESTYLE HOMES CURRENTLY BUILDS IN 10 DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITIES IN FLORIDA.

scientists at the Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC). FSEC is a research institute of the University of Central Florida, charged by the Florida Legislature to develop and approve enhanced energy efficiency technologies for the people of Florida.

The collaboration resulted in the HERS 60 LifeStyle SunSmart(SM) home, homes crafted through an exclusive combination of better building techniques and higher-performance components that deliver durability and substantially reduce electrical bills, 40 percent to be exact. Plus, the homes are considered cost neutral, meaning for every extra dollar that a homeowner pays in their mortgage to cover the increased cost for more superior construction, a dollar is saved in energy costs. A tighter, more efficient, environmentally responsible home for no added cost? How could homebuyers resist?





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They couldn't, and still can't. "The market appeal these homes have generated preserved our company during the downturn and is leading the way to abundance in the recovery," said Luhn. "Energy-efficiency has allowed us to continue buying from our suppliers and keep our trade partners working. In the process, energy-efficiency has led us to a position of market dominance — proof of good things coming our way when we try to do right by others."

It wasn't too long until LifeStyle Homes was itching to take the next step in efficient building — tackling the Net Zero Energy home. The answer, they found was to take their HERS 60 LifeStyle SunSmart(SM) home

and add a custom-engineered, roof-mounted, photovoltaic, solar power array — much like those used at the International Space Station. The result is the certified HERS 0 LifeStyle SunSmart(SM) homes.

Working again with the FSEC, LifeStyle Homes created their first Net Zero Energy Home — the St. Croix sales model home in Tralee Bay Estates, a neighborhood within the Capron Ridge master planned community in Melbourne, Fla. Not only did the home sell before it was even completed, it also gained international recognition, winning the 2011 Aurora Award for Best Solar Energy Home at the SouthEastern Builders Conference and the title of Best Net Zero Energy Home in North America from the Net Zero Home Coalition of Canada.

Every home LifeStyle Homes builds is either a HERS 60 LifeStyle SunSmart(SM) home (included as standard) or a HERS 0 LifeStyle SunSmart(SM) home, which offers what LifeStyle Homes is promoting as Free

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*— Jake Luhn, CEO, LifeStyle Homes*



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Electricity for LIFE!© This means that within each year the home's solar panels will generate as much power as the family living in it will use.

The builder has indeed sustained, and even grown business by turning to efficient building. "We only build to order. In calendar year 2013, we will complete 63 guaranteed HERS 60 LifeStyle SunSmart(SM) homes and 6 certified Net

Zero SunSmart(SM) homes," Luhn says.

According to Luhn, LifeStyle Homes will continue along its path, doing its best to educate buyers and forward the industry as a whole. "We figure the more we demonstrate how powerful energy efficiency is to customers, the sooner the day will come when we will be able to build our Florida dream home." He adds that while Net Zero homes are possible and well received, the real barrier still lies in their additional cost. "We will be looking for cost reduction more than performance improvement, because making Net Zero more affordable is the key to getting more Net Zero homes built."

"Up until now, home builders have built homes people live in," says Larry Hufford, founding partner of LifeStyle Homes. "In the future, the near future, they will be building electrical generating stations people live in."



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