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Section F Saturday, May 21, 2011

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LifeStyle Homes takes net-zero energy to the ‘extreme’

BY ANNE STRAUB
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

Many builders have responded to consumer demand for more energy efficient homes, but few have risen to the challenge like LifeStyle Homes. Capping a long list of innovations in home building, LifeStyle has committed to building net-zero energy homes on remaining sites in its West Melbourne community of Whispering Winds.

Net-zero energy homes produce as much or more power than they consume: Photovoltaic panels on the roof convert solar energy into electricity, producing enough power to run the home.

During months of excess power production, the homeowner receives credits from the power company that are used in exchange for additional power needed during high-demand summer months.

At LifeStyle’s net-zero energy home in Tralee Bay at Capron Ridge in

Melbourne, the homeowner is running an energy surplus for the first six months of homeownership. The home, the first net-zero energy home in Brevard County, was purchased in October 2010.

LifeStyle recently sold another net-zero spec home at Whispering Winds, and has presold two units that will start construction soon. The company is building energy efficient homes elsewhere, as well, including Capron Ridge and Sereno Point in Titusville. “People love it,” said Jake Luhn, LifeStyle chief executive officer, noting consumers’ concern about rising energy costs.

LifeStyle enjoyed a national forum for its efforts on Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. The builder constructed a net-zero energy home for the Canaveral Groves family featured on the program earlier this year.

The homes are certified by scientists at the Florida Solar Energy Center to significantly exceed the efficiency of other new homes.



Photos by Casey DeCotis, FLORIDA TODAY

LifeStyle Homes recently sold this net-zero spec home at Whispering Winds in West Melbourne. In the photo above, you can see the photovoltaic panels on the roof which convert solar energy into electricity. The inset photo shows the inverter on the side of the home, which converts the DC power from the sun into AC power to be used in the house. Below, you see that from the front, the home is not only energy-efficient, but very attractive and well-built.



Community: Whispering Winds
Builder: LifeStyle Homes
Location: On the east side of Dairy Road, south of U.S. 192 in West Melbourne.
Homes: 14 home sites remain in the 140-home community
Home size: 1,700 to 3,000 square feet under air conditioning
Site size: 75 by 120 feet
Price range: \$249,000 to mid \$300,000 range
Association fees: \$360 annually
Features: SunSmart PV energy efficiency components include 5.76 kilowatt photovoltaic system, solar-powered water heater, solar-powered attic ventilation fans, pressure-tested air ducts, air handler mounted in conditioned space, filtered outside air supply to heating and cooling unit, 15-SEER air-conditioning unit, double-paned low e windows, radiant barrier, R-38 ceiling insulation, compact fluorescent lighting, Energy Star appliances, computerized energy-use monitor.
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