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Powered by the sun, built by LifeStyle Homes

BY ANNE STRAUB
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

LifeStyle Homes continues its dedication to energy efficient housing with the construction of its first net-zero energy home.

Powered by photovoltaic panels integrated into the tile roof, the model will generate enough electricity to supply the needs of a family of five at the pool home. Sunny days will produce a surplus of power that's sold to the utility company to offset power needs on cloudy days and at night, when the panels can't meet demand.

The home, the St. Croix floor plan, is located in Tralee Bay Estates in the Capron Ridge subdivision in Melbourne, near Viera, and will serve as LifeStyle's model in the community. It's expected to be complete in mid-August.

Rather than mounting solar panels on the roof, which some homeowners consider unsightly, LifeStyle applied the panels to the roof before the tiles were laid. The result is panels that blend in with the flat tile roof.

"For the average family of five, there will not be a power bill at the end of the year," said Jake Luhn, LifeStyle sales and marketing manager. Sunny winter days will produce a surplus of power that's sold to Florida Power & Light, resulting in credits for the homeowner. Heavier power demand in the summer is unlikely to exhaust the banked credits.

The St. Croix model covers 2,390 square feet under air conditioning and includes four bedrooms, three bathrooms and a three-car garage with an outlet compatible for charging an electric car. The model already has been sold.

"We are proud to be building the first production home with this capability in Brevard County, and we're excited to be building it two years ahead of schedule,"

Luhn said. LifeStyle launched its SunSmart energy efficiency initiative last year. The package was so well-received, he said, that LifeStyle moved up its plans to build the net-zero energy home.

LifeStyle created the SunSmart energy conservation program in partnership with the Florida Solar Energy Center. Technology and design featured in the home will deliver at least 40 percent savings in annual energy costs over a comparably sized new home that isn't built to SunSmart standards, Luhn said. Savings over a home on the resale market is even greater, estimated at 70 percent. FSEC certifies the energy efficient homes and helped guide LifeStyle through the federal Builders Challenge program to promote green building.

"We are very proud of our affiliation with LifeStyle Homes and of their commitment to the Builders Challenge program," said Kevin Schleith, FSEC project analyst. "Throughout the development program, we have seen LifeStyle consistently exceed the benchmarks set for advancing the energy efficiency of new homes. This latest step will surely raise the bar for other builders to follow."

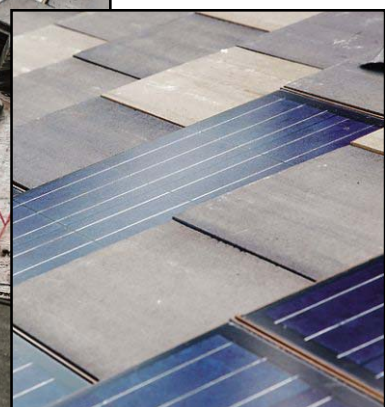
The SunSmart package includes a solar-powered 80-gallon water heater, high-performance 14-SEER air conditioning unit, pressure-tested air ducts, air handler mounted in conditioned space, double-pane low-e PGT windows, R-38 ceiling insulation, double-furred exterior wall insulation, solar-powered attic ventilation fans and a radiant heat barrier under roof.

LifeStyle has completed or presold 29 SunSmart homes since the program's inception. The builder is selling from a LifeStyle home in Tralee Bay and will move its sales staff to the new model when it's complete.

"We've had so much success with SunSmart, we moved forward to stay on the forefront of energy efficiency in new homes," Luhn said. "We just think it's the right thing to do."



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PHOTOS BY CASEY DECOTIS, FLORIDA TODAY

<p>Community: Tralee Bay Estates at Capron Ridge</p> <p>Featured builder: LifeStyle Homes</p> <p>Location: On the south side of Viera Boulevard, between U.S. 1 and Murrell Road in Melbourne, near Viera.</p> <p>Homes: 40 to 45 by LifeStyle</p> <p>Home size: 2,000 to 3,300 square feet under air conditioning.</p> <p>Site size: Standard is 75 feet by 120 feet</p>	<p>Price range: Approximately \$280,000 to \$450,000</p> <p>Association fees: \$990 annually</p> <p>Features: SunSmart energy efficiency package including 80-gallon solar water heater and solar attic fans, tile roof, brick paver driveways.</p> <p>Amenities: Gated community within Capron Ridge, community pool, clubhouse, fitness center, natural preserves.</p> <p>For more information: Call 321-298-5208</p>
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