

Real Estate eNews

Homes of the Future

What would you expect to find in the home of the future? It might not be an autocoaster as seen on the futuristic cartoon "The Jetsons," but it will almost certainly include solar panels, energy efficient appliances, and perhaps a place to plug in your electric car.



Large home builders are discovering that green leads to green... in other words, the "greener" and more energy-efficient the home, the more inclined a prospect is to purchase, and buy at a fair price.

As a result, builders are already hard at work constructing the "home of the future," with many builders including solar panels in the overall design of a new home. Since solar panels are included as part of the initial design, no additional construction or retrofitting will be necessary, saving the new owners 20 to 30 percent on installation, as well as eliminating the need for a remodel to retrofit solar panels.



In addition, builders are including a storage cabinet to house lithium battery packs. These packs will be used to store energy for later use. The cabinets use a light array to display storage capacity. The packs are expected to store up to 16 kilowatt-hours of electricity.

While testing this prototype in several homes in California, this battery storage system may ultimately push these homes further into the future. Such battery storage systems will be ultimately designed to connect to "smart" meters which make it easier for homeowners to monitor electricity use. With connectivity between "smart" meters and a "smart" grid, users can decide to purchase electricity during off-peak times instead of the higher-priced peak periods of morning, afternoon and early evening.

These battery packs have the potential to allow homeowners to exercise control over their use of electricity, moving the kilowatts between electric car battery, into the home or into a storage battery, depending on their needs and the price of power at any given time. It is possible that a battery pack might even allow homeowners to store low-cost, night-time electricity in their battery packs, for use during a higher-cost time of day.

Other home-builders are not planning on being left behind. Lennar builders has announced a new PowerSmartSM Model, designed to cut energy expenses as much as forty percent. This will be done through energy efficient heating, cooling, appliances, lighting and windows.



In the Northeast, three builders have joined forces to produce the evo Home, eco-friendly and without the hassle of a custom-built home. As a standard in every design, Evo Homes will offer solar water heating, Energy Star lighting and appliances as well as certification from the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program. Homes will range from 1,600 square feet to 2,800 square feet and are expected to cost \$300,000 to \$600,000.

Other features expected to be incorporated into "green homes" include LED lighting, which is still costlier than compact fluorescent bulbs, but can last for several decades. Triple-glazed windows will also become common, with different glass used on a home's south exposure versus east or west. And eventually, the goal is to have all new residential construction to be "Zero Net," drawing zero net energy from the power grid – homes feeding back into the grid as much energy they consume over the course of a year.