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Levent Ozler

Livinghomes Gives Conscientious Consumers a Home to Match the Lifestyle



The residents on Highland Avenue, a quiet hillside street in Santa Monica, California, have welcomed a new neighbor, the first-ever LivingHome, a revolutionary alternative to the traditional house. In April, the first LivingHomes model home was "installed," or lowered onto a concrete slab in 11 modules by a 350-ton crane over the space of eight hours. Founded by CEO Steve Glenn, [LivingHomes](http://www.livinghomes.com) is a developer of modern, sustainable prefabricated homes designed by world-class architects. The company and its products fill an important void in the residential housing world, offering a unique level of considered design and production. Never before have consumers had access to a home that marries the highest levels of green and good design, not to mention value. LivingHomes targets the growing class of "cultural creatives" -- people who value design, health and ecological sustainability in the products they buy. These conscientious consumers drive Priuses, buy Bosch appliances and Design Within Reach furniture, shop at Whole Foods, and give money to the National Resources Defense Fund. Now with LivingHomes, they have a home to match

their lifestyles.



LivingHomes' first full-time model home is a three-dimensional exhibit of modern design and healthy living. Glenn's vision for LivingHomes, one that is unique among homebuilders and which already has received the endorsement and financial backing of leading venture capitalists, was born of his frustrated desire to be an architect as a young man. Realizing his talents lay in the business of innovation, the technology entrepreneur, who was a founder or member of the founding team of Clearview Software, idealab, and PeopleLink, set his sites on redefining the residential development space. Marrying his passion for the environment and business acumen with guidance from a team of experienced advisors, including iconic architect Ray Kappe, Glenn has spent the last two years making his LivingHomes dream a reality.

"Our mission is to create homes and communities that inspire people and foster family and community interaction, making modern life easier, healthier, and more comfortable," says Glenn. "We're developing homes that combine world-class architecture with environmentally responsible design to offer an unprecedented level of form, functionality, and sustainability - - at a cost that is considerably less than a similar, site-built custom architectural home." says Glenn.

Glenn tapped internationally-renowned architect and Southern California icon Ray Kappe to design the first suite of LivingHomes. Kappe, founder of the acclaimed Southern California Institute of Architecture, has been much lauded by colleagues and the general public over the last 35 years, receiving the AIA/LA Gold Medal and the Richard Neutra International

Medal for Design Excellence, among numerous other awards.



Nature Made - Factory Built

What sets LivingHomes apart from its competitors is the fact that the company will incorporate environmental considerations and energy systems that are unparalleled in production homes, prefab or site constructed ("stick-built").

"We are designing our homes to create the healthiest living environments -- and to radically reduce the impact they have on soil, water, air and energy use," says Glenn. "We are following the four core tenants of good sustainable design: to reduce, reuse, recycle and reclaim. Our goal is 'zero energy', 'zero water', 'zero carbon', and 'zero emissions'."

Glenn's model home is slated to be one of the first residential projects to be evaluated by the U.S. Green Building Council's pilot LEED for Home program, and is expected to garner the highest level of LEED for Home certification - Platinum. "People are sometimes confused about what it means to be a 'green' home," says Glenn. "As a result, we're using LEED for Home to help to give them some context, and provide a basis for comparison to other homes." LivingHomes is committed to only building homes that are at least LEED for Home silver qualified. The United States Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership for Environmental and Energy Design) for Home program (www.usgbc.org) includes site inspections of homes and a four-tiered rating system.



To meet the high standards set by the USGBC and to respond to the market's appetite for healthy, sustainable living, each LivingHome includes an extensive environmental program. The model home will be 'zero energy,' meaning that it will produce all the power that it consumes. Photovoltaic cells on the roof will produce the home's energy and an active solar system on the roof will use the sun's energy to heat the home's water. A radiant heating system embedded in the floor of the home will warm the space more efficiently and healthfully, rather than forcing air laden with contaminants throughout the home. While the home is over 70% glass, a building material that is generally not considered to be very energy-efficient, LivingHomes uses double-paned glass from Fleetwood and Polygal polycarbonate fenestration that has three times the thermal properties of regular glass, allowing the model home to sacrifice neither the aesthetic nor the practical. Another goal is 'zero water,'" -- the home will not use city water for irrigation; instead, a rooftop garden insulates the home and absorbs sunlight (reducing the heat island affect of standard black roofs), and features a storm water management system that will collect rainwater in a cistern to be used for landscaping irrigation. A grey water system will also collect and recycle water from the sink and shower to be used for irrigation purposes. To achieve 'zero emissions,' the home features formaldehyde- and urea-free millwork and no or low-VOC paint. Each LivingHomes purchase includes an allotment for a carbon-offset to cover the manufacture and first-year operations of the home. Through key partnerships with companies that are equally committed to sustainable design, the model home will feature appliances by Bosch, LED lighting by PermLight, photovoltaic cells by PermaCorp, fixtures by Kohler, Forest Stewardship Council certified lumber by Eco-Lumber Co-op, special roofing by Carlisle, a spa by Jacuzzi, and furnishings by Design Within Reach.



"Since building in harmony with nature and environmental considerations have always been important aspects of my work, I was thrilled when LivingHomes approached me to design their first line of sustainable prefabricated homes," says Ray Kappe. "I am proud to be part of one of the first companies in the world to seamlessly fuse modern design with green design."

In addition to the use of sustainable materials and the incorporation of environmental systems, LivingHomes has optimized its construction and purchase process to minimize material usage. Prefabrication saves considerable construction waste over traditional site built methods (40% of construction material ends up in landfill versus 2% for prefab). Rather than demolish and contribute to landfill, LivingHomes deconstructs and reuses materials from existing structures.

To make LivingHomes more affordable than similarly constructed custom homes, LivingHomes is standardizing its designs and engaging in community development, so the company can manufacture homes in volume, using factory production. In addition to waste reduction, prefabrication can save considerable time and money over stick-built methods (see sidebar), and the quality is actually higher since modular homes must be built to withstand the rigors of being transported by truck and lowered into place by cranes.



Form and Function

The Santa Monica model home represents one of four base models designed by Kappe and offered by LivingHomes. In Kappe's hallmark Californian modernist style, it boasts clean lines, indoor/outdoor space, extensive natural light, built-in furniture and a "Living Roof" – a roof-top garden area with fire pit. Known for designs that are 'the apotheosis of the California wood house,' Kappe has always believed firmly that modern architecture can be warm, earth-friendly, site-sensitive, and very livable.

"We have spent a considerable amount of time trying to understand how people live in their homes -- and how homes need to respond to their changing needs," says Glenn. "As a result, we include a number of features that make it easy for homeowners to change and grow their space, including movable walls, changeable millwork and a structural system that allows rooms to be added."

Currently LivingHomes is completing only custom projects for homes that range from 800 to 4,000+ square feet. In the future, LivingHomes will offer standard floor plans and customers will be able to choose between basic packages, personalizing their home to their specific needs by selecting different floor plans, materials and environmental packages. The four Ray Kappe LivingHomes will range from \$150 to \$250 per square foot, excluding foundation and transportation of modules. The moderately priced homes are designed for infill, move-up and second-home venues. For first-time buyers, LivingHomes will offer a smaller, more affordable one-story home with many of the same features as the other models, but on a smaller scale. LivingHomes can be built individually on small to medium flat or hillside lots of 3,000 sq.ft. or more to facilitate urban infill development or in small communities of 10 - 70

homes.

Next Up From LivingHomes

In addition to making their product available directly to individual home buyers, LivingHomes is also targeting developers and production homebuilders with the specific goal of creating communities that embrace modern design and sustainability. Contrary to traditional housing developments, LivingHomes communities will be smaller with homes clustered together, when possible, to preserve open spaces. LivingHomes will also strive to preserve natural environments by locating communities near mass transit hubs and within reasonable walking distance from other retail and commercial facilities. As with individual products, LivingHomes communities will incorporate green and energy efficient design at every level to mitigate the impact that the communities have on soil, water and land.

LivingHomes is already at work on a community in Joshua Tree. The area is becoming a magnet for a burgeoning community of artists, entertainment and creative professionals who are drawn to its stark and alluring setting and solitude.

To offer customers the best designs, LivingHomes will partner with world-class architects who have a proven ability to develop residences in line with LivingHomes' values. David Hertz – largely considered to be one of the top modern green architects in the country and an expert at materials and building systems – is currently designing the next LivingHomes product.

Although targeted at a niche market of people who value good, modern design and healthy, sustainable living, the LivingHomes message seems to be resonating with a large audience: five homes are already in various stages of development in Northern and Southern California.