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Prefab homebuilder in Santa Monica, Calif., becomes the first to reach the highest level of certification in the new LEED® for Homes program.



GREEN HOMEBUILDING GOES PLATINUM

BY KIM SINGLETARY

Every industry is propelled forward by the few — those compelled by the goal of nudging the bar just a little bit higher.

When it comes to building sustainable homes, a prefab homebuilder called LivingHomes® has gone beyond a nudge — kicking the bar up at least a few good feet.

Located in Santa Monica, Calif., LivingHomes' model home has become the first-ever to receive the highest certification possible in the U.S. Green Building Council's pilot LEED® for Homes program.





LivingHomes' model home in Santa Monica, Calif., has become the first-ever to receive the highest certification possible in the U.S. Green Building Council's new pilot program, LEED® for Homes. The result has been thousands of e-mail requests for tours of the model home and tremendous interest in the company's first line of unbelievably efficient houses, designed by iconic Southern California architect Ray Kappe, FAIA.

What is LEED for Homes?

Adopted nationwide as the benchmark for leadership in sustainable building, the LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, Green Building Rating System™ has, up to this point, been designed only for commercial applications. In 2007, however, the well-known and respected program will branch out into the residential sector with the full public launch of LEED for Homes scheduled early this year.

As buyer tastes lean toward more environmentally responsible options in food, clothing and transportation, LEED for Homes provides builders with a way to attract this growing population with homes that follow voluntary, measurable guidelines for specific green building criteria — taking the ambiguity out of what it means to be “green.”

Similar to the commercial program currently available, the residential version awards buildings with points based on their efficient use of energy resources, water resources, building construction resources and land resources, as well as consideration of enhanced indoor environmental quality.



Although it may appear futuristic and includes some astonishing features, LivingHomes' Santa Monica model is not a concept home — it is an example of today's possibilities. Currently, LivingHomes is completing only custom projects ranging in size from 800 to 4,000-plus square feet, but the plan is to move to standard floor plan offerings that can be customized with a range of material choices and environmental packages.



Though LEED for Homes categories differ somewhat from the commercial program, the four-tiered rating system is the same. A building may become certified or score beyond certification level to that of Silver, Gold or Platinum. Since 2000, 550 commercial buildings have been certified; 20 received Platinum status.

A Santa Monica masterpiece

Out of a possible 108 points on the LEED for Homes rating system, LivingHomes' Santa Monica model home, completed in May 2006, earned an astonishing 91. The home's host of features ranges from the expected, like all Energy Star® appliances, native and drought tolerant landscaping and low VOC paints, to the unexpected, such as a rainwater harvesting system to reclaim water for irrigation, an on-site photovoltaic system that serves as the home's energy source and a rooftop garden complete with a fire pit that reduces the heat island effect and helps insulate the home. It is estimated that the home will be 80 percent more efficient than a conventional residence, and it was produced using 75 percent less construction waste — assembled with 11 modules on site in approximately eight hours.



AN ON-SITE PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEM SERVES AS THE HOME'S ENERGY SOURCE.

More than just amazingly functional, the home is as much about design as performance. LivingHomes' products are indistinguishable from high-end stick-built custom homes. The clean, modern lines and generous use of glass — making up about 70 percent of the home — create a strong sense of space and serenity, exemplifying the Californian modernist style for which architect Ray Kappe is known.

In addition to exuding a sense of warmth and light, the home combines great volume and texture an extremely healthy dwelling.

Though it may look futuristic and boasts some incredible features, this model home is not a concept home; it is a way for buyers to get a look at what is possible, and affordable, for them right now. The first line of LivingHomes — the Ray Kappe line — is comprised of four products, ranging from smaller, more affordable one-story homes to two- and three-story homes designed for large lots or narrow infill spaces. They are priced from \$150 to \$250 per square foot. Currently, the company is completing only custom projects ranging in size from 800 to 4,000-plus



LivingHomes' products are designed to adapt to homeowners' continually shifting needs. Movable walls, changeable millwork and a structural system that allows for the easy incorporation of room additions enable the living space to change and grow alongside its occupants.

square feet, but the plan is to move to standard floor plan offerings that can be customized with a range of material choices and environmental packages. In fact, a LivingHomes home is all about choice and flexibility.

The company has 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. As a result, LivingHomes includes 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.

Good ideas spread fast

With homes that boast superior efficiency, innovative design and the ability to be constructed on site in a single day — all for a lower cost than similar, site-built homes, it's no surprise that LivingHomes is quickly making its mark. Five homes are already being developed in Northern and Southern California, and the company is at work on a community in Joshua Tree. The second line of LivingHomes is currently being designed by David Hertz, AIA. The company is targeting developers and production homebuilders with its product to help create a new wave of green, and gorgeous, communities.



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Prefab Know-How

Off-site, factory construction, or prefabrication, improves quality and reduces cost, production schedules and construction waste. Assembled over a four- to five-month period in a regional factory, LivingHomes prefab houses are literally “installed” in one day. Key advantages of prefabrication include:

- 1 Site work and factory work are performed simultaneously instead of one after the other.**
- 2 Full-time factory employees substitute dozens of contracts, saving time, money and management overhead.**
- 3 Modular construction streamlines the process by enabling the use of better tools, providing access to otherwise difficult to reach places and allowing multiple trades to work concurrently.**

For more information on this type of building and homes by LivingHomes, visit www.livinghomes.us.