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A green and plugged-in house

A showcase house fuses eco-intelligent design with the latest home technologies.

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The BMW Hydrogen 7 courtesy car winds through the lush canyons of Crestwood Hills in West Los Angeles, then drops off visitors in front of a two-story glass, steel and cement house nestled into the hill.

The house is the first Wired Home, a collaboration between the technology gurus at Wired magazine and the green-design experts at LivingHomes, a builder of luxury sustainable homes and communities. Think of the house as a laboratory where sustainability and technology are mixed in a designer petri dish.

The modular home has pedigree, having been designed by Ray Kappe, an indomitable force in the West's modernist architecture and the founder of the Southern California Institute of Architecture.

My tour of the house begins at the atrium, which is equipped with Panasonic's BM-ET330 Iris Reader, a device that allows the homeowner to check out the identity of a visitor via a scan of the iris (remember Tom Cruise in "Minority Report?")

Next stop, the home's private quarters, all on the lower level. The vibe is low-key, cozy and comfortable. It feels like someone actually resides in the house, perhaps a genius geek who has made billions from taking his technology venture public. I peek at the imaginary owner's hobby room, accessorized with a Hakko

soldering station and a Draganflyer, an aerial video system. This room, with its view of the house's underbelly, calls to mind one word: cave, for when the husband wants to disappear into his world of tinkering with toys.

The eco-friendly elements, on the other hand, are the fine print in the presentation. You might not know what you're seeing is green unless you know the brand, ask someone or look at the tour brochure. Take the home office's sleek Zody task chair. Who would have thought that it contains as much as 50 percent recycled content? Other eco-intelligent items are more obvious: A headboard made of symmetrical strips of aged and reclaimed Peroba wood and responsibly harvested mahogany dominates the master bedroom like a wood sculpture, softened by white Matteo organic linens.



The airy entertaining spaces upstairs, on the other hand, are an exercise in the glass-house life. In the U-shaped upper level, the dining room and media room look out to canyon views of the West Side. The occasional area rug – eco-friendly, of course – not only breaks up the expanse of concrete on the floor and defines spaces that segue seamlessly into each other, but also absorbs sound bouncing off the many hard surfaces.

Not everything is a new piece of green furniture on purpose, says Joe Lucas, who with partner Parrish Chilcoat, executed the interior decor. Lucas says he didn't want the predictable green home. To Lucas, green design also means repurposing old pieces that still have style and character. "Why not reuse beautiful pieces that were built during the time of the design of the house (mid-century)?" he says.

To that end, Lucas and Chilcoat chose curved-arm chrome dining chairs by Milo Baughman and reupholstered them in Luna Textiles' Mezzanine, an eco-friendly polyester. For the living room, they selected a reupholstered and restored Rudolph Schindler daybed from NOHO Modern. Talk about high-brow recycling.

Lucas says he also wanted to steer away from the clichés of midcentury style – a look so popular these days. "We didn't want it to look like a Design within Reach showroom," he says. "So we didn't do the Eames chair or the Saarinen table."

There are conversation pieces sprinkled throughout the upper level. My favorites are the orange-red RD4 chair, which is handwoven from thick ribbons of recycled plastic waste material, and Control, a tongue-in-cheek sculpture of a video-game controller.

As for technology, the Wired Home is tricked out with several items that you can integrate into your home now if you're willing to spend for them, including the Lucid Design Dashboard, a real-time feedback system that tracks your home's energy consumption.



One worth considering if you've got a spouse, like mine, who perpetually forgets to turn off the lights no matter how many times you plead: the Card Access InHome Wireless Sensor that controls the lighting, climate and audio/video as you walk into or out of a room.

Or you can buy the entire green and plugged-in house and be done with it. The Wired Home is on the market for \$4.3 million.