

The Front Porch

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Developers give prefab house the green light

“Green” building and design ideas and practices are popping up everywhere, from the Harvard Business Review to MTV.

Now, a supergreen, prefabricated house designed by Southern California architect Ray Kappe for developer LivingHomes is the first to use almost every ecofriendly material and tactic in one package and achieve a platinum ranking, the highest of four levels, from the U.S. Green Building Council. The model home, recently assembled from 11 prefab modules delivered to a Santa Monica site, is one of four base models by Kappe, a leading modernist known for his wood houses.

The house is expected to be 80 percent more energy efficient than a conventional house of similar size and location. It will generate most of its own electricity and heat water with photovoltaic cells, recycle household water to irrigate its native landscaping and roof garden (designed by Richard Grigsby) and use special fans to remove airborne moisture and harmful gases.

More than 70 percent of the exterior is made of glass window-walls – a hallmark of modernist design but for decades the bane of energy savings. Now, technological advances in thermal glass and coatings make it possible to enjoy California's indoor-outdoor lifestyle without paying huge winter heating bills.

Helping to save the planet doesn't come cheap (LivingHomes estimates a cost of \$150 to \$250 per square foot, excluding foundations), but the trade-off may be long-term environmental and economic savings.

For more information on this home and other sustainable building practices, send a fax to LivingHomes at (310) 496-2167 or visit www.livinghomes.us and the Green Building Council's site at www.usgbc.org.

–ANN JARMUSCH