



PHOTOS BY JACK HARDMAN/SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

Carlos Pereyra installs Hardi Board in a home in St. James City. The Hardi Board is longer lasting and is used to replace wood.

Builder creates green getaway

Energy-efficient home going up on Pine Island

BY RENEE SIMMONS
Special to The News-Press

With the current state of the economy, not many people are building new homes in Lee County.

But Cape Coral-based Tundra Homes is putting up an energy-efficient home on Pine Island that already has a buyer.

Tundra is using cutting edge technology to keep a home's carbon footprint down while sending up the savings for homeowners.

After a lengthy certification process with the Florida Green Building Coalition, and with the help of consultant Dr. Jennifer Languell of Trifecta Construction Solutions (recently featured on the Discovery Channel for her work), Tundra Homes is poised to deliver the first green-certified home on



David Gydos of Tundra Homes is currently constructing a green home in St. James City.

Pine Island.

Located in St. James City, this custom-built, 1,500-square-foot home delivers a solid and impressive list of features from top to bottom beginning with the open floor plan, which was designed to

maximize ventilation and the use of natural light. While the metal roof is reflecting the sun to reduce heat, the spray-foam insulation made from recycled plastic material is working from within to provide better energy efficiency throughout.

Inside, low-flow faucets and toilets are used to initiate water savings and all appliances come with the Energy Star certification for maximum energy efficiency. Sherwin Williams brand low-VOC paints were carefully chosen for the lower level of toxic emissions released. And for the same reason, low-VOC sealants and adhesives are utilized as well.

Because carpet tends to harbor dust and mites, it was swapped for a tile and bamboo flooring motif, which is a quickly renewable resource with extremely low formaldehyde emissions. Match that with a solar-powered hot water tank, marble and granite countertops, recessed lighting and many other coveted features and you have an elegant, earth-friendly home that truly is as practical as it is beautiful.

See **GREEN G9**



PHOTOS BY JACK HARDMAN/SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

Steve Grochowski and Jeremy Johnson install a 900-gallon septic tank while working on a home in St. James City.

GREEN

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"That's what we want," said Heidi Beverly, co-owner of Tundra Homes, about the house's practical use of resources. "We don't care really about the label. Does it actually work, does it actually save you money in the long run?"

Fort Myers-based Tri-fecta, which provides builders, contractors, local governments and others with consulting and certification services in green building, says green building really works. They've estimated that the total annual energy cost for the home will be \$988 a year, or \$82 a month. Compare that to local homes of the same square footage that are getting electric bills as much as \$250 in the summer months. And because prices in materials are continually coming down, eco-friendly homes are no longer outside the reach of the average family.

In fact, these homes begin at only \$140,000 and go up to about \$200,000. Another benefit Tundra has offered is the homes are not built on spec, they're customized and can be placed on any lot in any neighborhood you choose so you have freedom to live where you want and aren't confined to one community.

You won't have to wait



Crews work to construct the green home.

long for this new model Tundra is offering. In fact, it doesn't take more than two months to make this lifestyle change from contract to completion. "We picked up the building permit on August 14th ... and we are on schedule to complete it by October," Beverly said.

But with the average construction company suffering layoffs and many going out of business, has Tundra found a niche to keep it on the playing field or will the concept die out? Richard Durling, president of Marvin Development, thinks this is a trend that will endure. "Energy features are becoming extremely popular with the consumer ... We're definitely going to be in a situation where it really isn't going to be an option."

Durling doesn't think the size of the home will have a negative impact either. In fact, he thinks

homes with smaller square footage now have more staying power with consumers. "The public, as the economy has gotten worse, has started to shift from larger homes into smaller homes." In fact, recent studies show that consumers are gravitating toward homes with at least 200 square feet less than they have in years past in an effort to reduce not only their buying costs, but their cost of maintaining the home as well.

There are only three green-certified homes in Lee County, but Languell believes the numbers are about to increase substantially.

"As energy costs continue to rise, homes that can reduce a family's energy bills will have a definite advantage over homes that are not energy efficient," she said. "I think the market for green homes is poised to explode."