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Hurricane destruction spurs nature-proof, nature-friendly home

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Posted: 2008 Feb 08 - 00:46

By Karen Braynard

Staff writer

INDIALANTIC - On a quiet street in Indialantic, Mark Baker and Nonnie Chrystal are building their vision of the future: the Florida Showcase Green Envirohome.

The couple's home will be a hurricane resistant, environmentally friendly house, which they will open to the public in March after it is completed.

"Both of our families lost everything between hurricanes Francis, Charlie and Katrina. We wanted to build something that could survive hurricanes, fires and earthquakes, but we're also very conscious of our footprint on the environment " said Ms. Chrystal.

The home they are building is a model for the future. With native plants on the roof, structural insulated panels for walls, chemically treated trusses, and recycled tires for landscaping and drainage, Ms. Chrystal said this innovative home will stand the test of scrutiny for environmental protection and safety concerns.

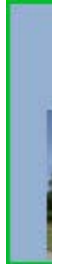
Their research for the home began in 2005. Ms. Chrystal said she entered the research without a lot of knowledge of construction materials but became an expert.

"I called every company that makes the products we were interested in and asked a lot of questions," she said.

After she and Mr. Baker decided which products they wanted to use, they asked companies to sponsor their home project. Many of the supplies were donated by the various vendors showcased through the home.

"We're not a non-profit, but we want to share what we've learned. Once the home is completed, we'll open it to the public. We have so many innovative things going on here, people can pick and choose what they might want to do in their own homes," she said.

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So what is in this envirohome?

Starting at the top of the home is a roof covered by indigenous plants which keep the home cool in the hot summer and warm in the cooler days of winter.

"Plants are similar to humans in that they maintain a constant temperature. A green roof minimizes the range of thermal contraction and expansion so it actually lasts longer as well," said Ms. Chrystal.

Beneath the plants are sheets of Flexi-Pave which allow rainwater to trickle through to the 90 percent recycled metal roof and collect in a cistern.

"We're the first home in the nation to have an Englert roof that's rated to withstand 175 mph winds," she said.

Ms. Chrystal said the home is Florida's first "whole house" gray water house.

According to [www.graywater.net](#), gray water is recycled from other uses in the home, other than from toilets. Water from dishwashing, showers, sinks, and laundry create up to 80 percent of residential waste water.

The FSGE uses shower and clothes water to flush toilets. A steambath will also help reduce water consumption by one third. Any overflow from the showers, steambath and clothes washer is directed back into the cistern.

Below the vegetation on the roof, the trusses are made of BluWood coated timber which is resistant to fire, mold, moisture, termites and corrosion.

"We want to push builders to incorporate some of these concepts and we want to inform the public they can affordably add environmental enhancements to their homes," said Ms. Chrystal.

Ultimately, the couple hopes to have "green teams" work as consultants to homebuilders to create their own envirohomes, incorporating the same technologies.

Contact Karen Braynard at (31) 751-5962 or e-mail braynard@hometownnewsol.com

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