

Florida House A Model For Sustainable Development

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Just as with any model home, the Florida House is open for visitors to come by and examine the spacious living areas, the builders' craftsmanship and the functional aspects of the layout.

The owners would like to see other dwellings built just like it, yet they'd also consider it a "sale" if visitors grasp some of the concepts displayed in this model and incorporated even a few features into their own homes.

It's the thought that counts.

The Florida House, a cracker-style home typical of oldtime Florida architecture, is a look ahead to a time when houses are made with more recycled components, fewer toxic materials, and with plumbing and electrical systems that use less water and energy, respectively.

The emphasis is on environmentally responsible construction without sacrificing livability, said John Lambie, president of the Florida House Foundation Inc. in Sarasota, which has as project partners the Sarasota County Cooperative Extension Service, Florida Power & Light Co., Sarasota Bay National Estuaries Program, Sarasota County School Board and teh Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Land for the traditional house, along with a soon-to-be-built contemporary version, was donated by the Sarasota County Technical Institute at the corner of Beneva and Proctor roads. Students from the institute's construction classes are helping build the houses.

"We look at this as an economic development incubator," said Lambie during a December tour prior to the Florida House's official opening. "By demonstrating sustainable development practices and availability of locally produced materials and products, the foundation hopes to enhance the community's economic health without the dire impact on its environmental wellbeing."



Florida House is a three-bedroom, two-bath floor plan with screened porches that take full advantage of prevailing breezes. Water-conserving plumbing fixtures were installed wherever possible, and a rooftop photovoltaic panel provides backup electric power that keeps an array of batteries charged.



John Lambie, left, and Michael Holsinger worked to get the project started.