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## Staying in the Parade of Homes

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The Parade of Homes used to be a no-brainer. Builders just had to enter it, because their competition surely did, with as many as 140 model homes during the boom years.

Now, with the home-building industry still reeling from the Great Recession, entering the Parade is no longer a given. Just 17 members of the Home Builders Association of Manatee-Sarasota have entered a total of 28 model residences in the 2010 Parade of Homes, which started Saturday.

The issue is not the cost to enter the parade (\$2,200 per unit), but the availability of model homes, says builder Derek Nelson of Arthur Rutenberg/Nelson Homes.

"With banks not financing models right now, it is really a strain on you to capitalize and build new models and buy dirt," said Nelson. "Most of the models have been sold off since last year's Parade and just haven't been reproduced or built because it is difficult to get financing.

But he expects to see more models in 2011. "You are starting to see them come out of the ground now, so I think 2011's Parade will be much stronger than 2010's."

In the meantime, the key word is commitment.



STAFF PHOTOS / HAROLD BUBIL

Tivoli Homes' Beach Comber model in The Cottages of Callista Village is certified by the Florida Green Building Coalition, with fiber-cement siding, impact-resistant windows and spray-foam insulation in the attic.

"The people who are in the Parade are people who have been able to position themselves in this housing downturn and stay committed," said Nelson.

The Parade of Homes continues through March 7 at new-home developments throughout the two counties. Entries will be judged for the annual design awards competition. Four developments also are entered and will be judged. Admission to the model homes is free.

A builder with a model that's making its Parade of Homes debut is Tivoli Homes of Sarasota. Its Beach Comber, with 1,975 square feet, is a green-certified house in the 21-lot Cottages of Callista Village at Longwood Run, off University Parkway. It has Key West styling, with a front porch and screened rear lanai overlooking a nature preserve. The Cottages come in three floor plans, with grand-opening prices from \$254,000 to \$280,000 for 1,691 to 1,975 square feet, including lot.

"We've owned the land for quite a few years, and we've decided to build green cottages, mostly because we didn't want to compete with the stuff that has been built in the last few years, with the market as it is -- short sales and foreclosures," said Gary Johnson, Tivoli's principal. "We wanted to build something different, and we feel like there is a pretty strong market for green homes.

"We like to put it in terms of how it benefits the homeowner," he added. "It is nice to be green, but what does it mean to the homeowner? It means that you are going to save a lot of money every month on your utility bills.

"So we are building with things like the Icynene insulation system in the attic, which means your attic is roughly the same temperature as the house."

Icynene is a spray-foam product that is applied to the underside of the roof deck, creating a sealed attic of "conditioned" space.

"The typical Florida attic in the summer can be as much as 140 degrees, and humid, and you have air-conditioning ducts that run through that," said Johnson. "The air-conditioning has to be oversized to compensate for that, to cool the home. By having an attic like this, the air-conditioning system can be sized to about 60 percent of what it would be otherwise."

The Tivoli cottages will be certified as green by the Florida Green Building Coalition and Energy Star. "They do the blower-door test to make sure everything is air-tight. In fact, we have zero-percent leakage; you can have up to 5 percent," said Johnson.

Other green features:

Solar water heating. "Water heating is 25 to 30 percent of the typical utility bill," Johnson said. "Combine that with the smaller A/C unit and it is a significant savings. We think we will be in the 50 to 70 percent range" less than a house built only to code.

PGT WinGuard windows, with impact-resistant and insulated, low-emissivity (low-e) glazing that reflects the sun's heat.

Pre-painted fiber-cement siding. "Part of being green is being durable and low-maintenance. The siding, soffit and fascia is all James Hardie Color-Plus," which has a 15-year warranty, said Johnson.

An unpainted, 5-V crimp metal roof that reflects solar radiation. "We have a cool attic to begin with, with the Icynene system, and having a metal roof is another significant factor in the efficiency of the home. Also, metal is the most wind-resistant roofing material for Florida."

Recycled-content carpeting.

Low- and no-VOC paints and adhesives.

Johnson said these and other green features in the house added about \$10,000 -- about 5 percent -- to the construction cost. But do buyers care enough about green construction to pay more for it?

"In this market, we are getting nice prices for these materials that would have cost us a lot more in years prior. We don't put a number on what it costs to go green. In this market, as a builder, we are absorbing the extra cost to go green. We are not charging our customers for it, because we know what we are competing against. We have a lot of houses on the market that were built a few years ago, but don't have this type of construction. In the future, we hope the market would allow us to charge an extra 5 percent.

"It's nice to have that plaque on your wall that says you're green," said Johnson. "But saving on your utility bill every month is what is important."

Other builders participating in the Parade of Homes: Neal Communities, Medallion Homes, John Cannon Homes, D.R. Horton, Arthur Rutenberg/Nelson Homes, Bruce Williams Homes, Camlin Homes, Gibraltar Homes, Lee Wetherington Homes, London Bay

Homes, M/I Homes, Minto Communities, Paradise Homes of Sarasota, Perrone Construction, Pulte Homes and Savannah Preserve.

For information on the 2010 Parade of Homes, go online to [paradeofhomesinfo.com](http://paradeofhomesinfo.com).

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