First certified green home completed in Venetian Bay

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NEW SMYRNA BEACH — With its white stucco walls and arched doorway, the one-story, three bedroom house doesn't look different from its neighbors.

But it is.

The home is the first certified Florida Green Building Coalition home in Southeast Volusia County.

The home, located in the Arbor Lakes community of Venetian Bay, was built with many recycled materials and is equipped with energy-saving features such as a solar water heater, low-flow toilets and ENERGY STAR appliances.

The features will save the new homeowners nearly $1,000 a year, said Kevin Para, the certifying agent who helped to oversee the home's construction.

The home is the fourth certified green home in Volusia County, with two previously built in Ormond Beach and one in DeLand, according to the Florida Green Building Coalition Web site.

"The main point is to save folks money," Mr. Para said. "It's a very high quality home that is not out of reach (for the average homeowner)."

Mr. Para said energy efficient homes typically sell for about 10 percent more than a regular home.

"Within a very short period, (the savings) would exceed that," Mr. Para said.

According to the Volusia County Property Appraiser, the 1,685-square-foot home recently sold for $239,900.

Venetian Bay developer Jerry Johnson said previous green homes were out of the price range for most people.

"It's the best of both worlds," he said. "It's environmentally sensitive and the other good side is that it has an economic benefit."

Mr. Johnson said the higher sale price is worth it, thanks to the energy savings.

"It may not be a deal today," he said. "But as time goes on, it's more of an opportunity for people to save."

Paul Rechichar, construction manager for Johnson Engineering, Inc.,

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Randy Barber/staff photographer

Kevin Para of Florida Green Building Coalition holds an incandescent light bulb that helps to reduce electricity bills in the first green certified home in the area.

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said it wasn't hard to get the green certification.

"Seventy percent of it we were already doing all along," he said. "We just exceeded it a bit."

Mr. Para had long been talking to Mr. Johnson about pursuing the Coalition's green certification for a home in Venetian Bay.

"We were interested in the future and what we can do," Mr. Para said. "It was both my passion and his recognition of investing in the community (that got the house built)."

According to the Coalition's Web site, for a home to be certified green, it must attain points for everything from light-colored paints to not having a garbage disposal.

The application, which Mr. Para submitted, included a thick notebook with pictures of every green aspect built into the house.

Even the construction, which included recycling as much of the leftover materials as possible, was included in the points system.

The home also received points for its safe room and high impact windows.

Both Mr. Para and Mr. Johnson said the home fits right in with Venetian Bay's "new urbanism" design, which encourages walking.

"All that bounces together," Mr. Para said. "All of these features are huge. Having a community with new urbanism, all of those are sustainable features."

Mr. Johnson said he is ready to do another green home.

"We'll see what the response is," he said.

Randy Barber/staff photographer

Kevin Para in front of Southeast Volusia's first green certified home.