

Home

Clean Living

Elegant homes that keep the Earth beautiful

By Thomas W. Krause

The two farmhouses on Murdock Road in Marietta, with their high ceilings, tall columns and wood floors, are reminiscent of the suburban Atlanta homes from a century ago.

Despite their classic look, these homes weren't built for the limited needs and desires of families living in 1909. Frankly, the builders have surpassed the expectations of families living in 2009.

Company officials at New World Home create houses so "green" that they consume about 50 percent of the energy used in standard homes. With all appliances running – televisions, air conditioning, fans, etc. – power bills average about \$2 per day. The designs also use significantly fewer construction materials and produce significantly less construction waste.

"We chose the traditional feel of the houses based on our view of the Atlanta community and the Atlanta lifestyle," said Michael Natbony, chief executive officer of New World Home. "We chose green, not because we thought it was a good idea, but because we thought it was the only idea."

Here's the kicker: they're modular homes.

Both Marietta houses were built in pieces and shipped from South Carolina to here, where they were assembled in a few short weeks. Mark Jupiter, the president of New World Home's product division, said he knows what people think when they hear the words "modular home." Images immediately come to mind of rectangular, trailer-sized boxes with polyester curtains.

"It's different than the modular home in their head," Jupiter said. "It's not the 'Don't you dare put that modular home in my neighborhood.' This house could look like anything. We chose to have it look like a historic home – a 120-year-old farmhouse."

Natbony said, despite the poor-quality perception, these modular homes are built to factory specifications that cannot be duplicated in the field. They are stronger and more efficiently built than homes constructed entirely on site.

Jupiter adds, as an example, that the basement sections of the modular homes are pre-boarded and pre-insulated. They are guaranteed for 25 years against water leaks.

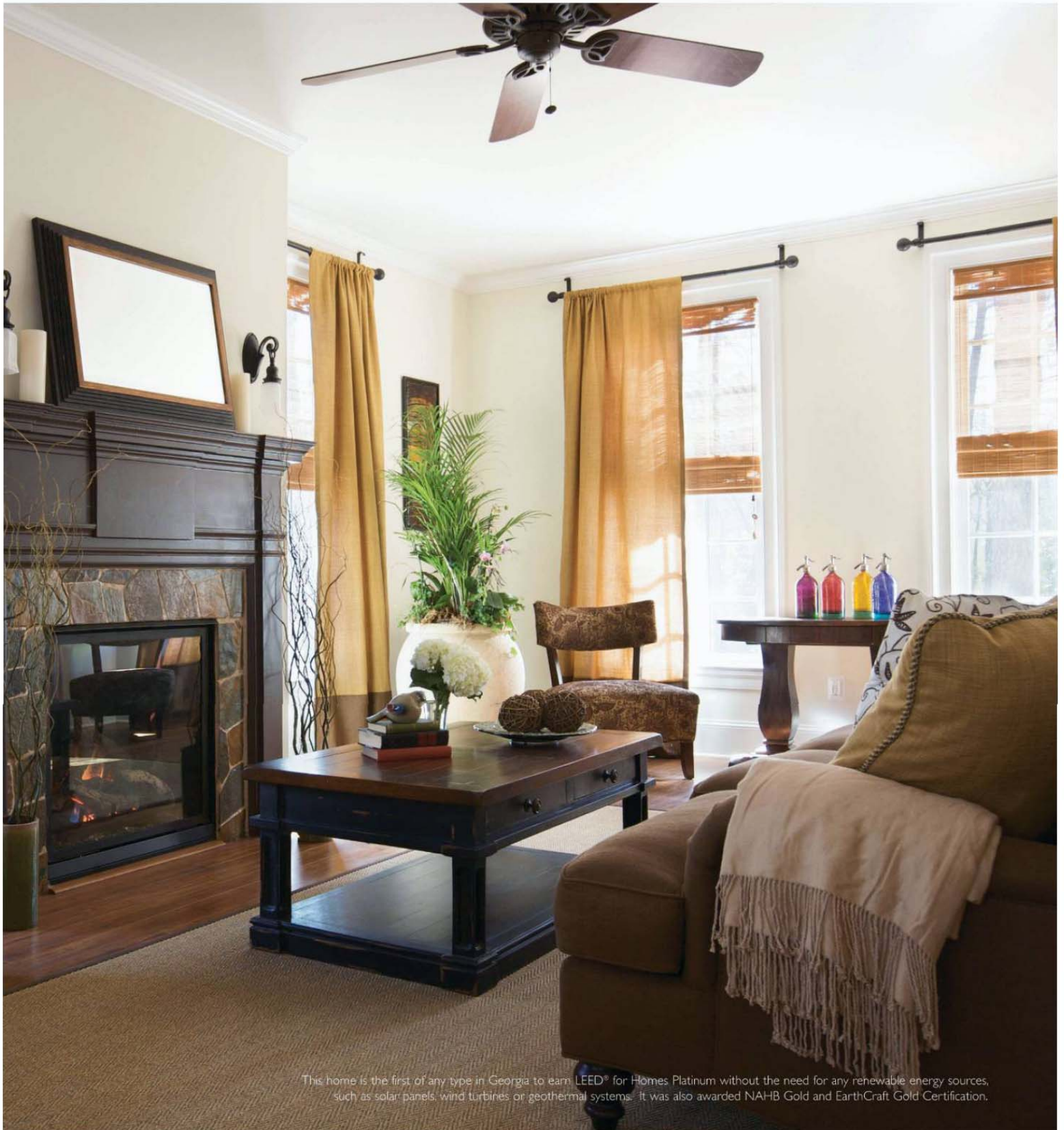
"The days of a cold, damp basement are over," he said.

To keep the houses efficient, New World Home utilizes modern accepted methods of energy conservation. The houses are equipped with



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Home



This home is the first of any type in Georgia to earn LEED® for Homes Platinum without the need for any renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, wind turbines or geothermal systems. It was also awarded NAHB Gold and EarthCraft Gold Certification.

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This home earned LEED® for Homes Platinum certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) for outstanding achievement in green homebuilding, representing the first factory-built home in the state of Georgia to earn this designation.



All of the kitchen appliances used in this home are ENERGYSTAR certified and typically 50% more efficient than standard appliances. The cabinetry and countertops are built for longevity and improved air quality by using non-added formaldehyde and low-VOC finishes.



New World Home uses Benjamin Moore's Natura zero-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint that is non-toxic, durable and contributes to a healthy indoor environment.



These modular homes are stronger and more efficiently built than homes constructed entirely on site.

compact fluorescent lighting, low-flow shower heads, zero-emission foam insulation, motion detectors that turn off light switches when a room becomes vacant, tankless hot water heaters and more.

The houses also are built to keep material usage to a minimum. For example, the walls are constructed with two-by-six wood studs every 24 inches instead of the standard two-by-four studs every 16 inches. This decreases the amount of wood used while increasing the allowable thickness of insulation. The houses are constructed from regional wood sources and the prefabricated house sections are built within a 500-mile radius of the construction location to prevent excess transportation.

As proof of the homes' green status, the first of the two Marietta houses has received the top certification level awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council. It is the first modular home anywhere to receive LEED Platinum certification. Certification on the second house is pending.

LEED, or Leadership in Energy Environmental Design, is a program developed by the Green Building Council to verify that buildings were designed in the interest of energy savings, water efficiency, low carbon-dioxide emissions, indoor environmental quality and the stewardship of resources during construction.

This is also the first LEED platinum home in Georgia that does not use renewable energy sources such as solar panels or wind turbines. Should a future owner add those modifications, the energy efficiency could increase exponentially.

"We actually managed to get this one platinum without renewables, like solar panels," said David Hunt, who was in charge of applying for LEED certification. "Not that there is anything wrong with solar panels, but we got the certification without it. This is a very tight home."

The two Marietta homes, constructed in December, have acted as models to build interest in the concept. Now, they are for sale. The 2,300-square-foot LEED Platinum house for \$589,900 and the 2,500-square-foot house next door for \$549,900. The slightly smaller house is more expensive because it has more custom options than the second house, company officials said.

So far, New World Home is under contract for several hundred homes in states including Illinois and New York. Although, New World officials said they hope to stay away from the construction end of the business. Instead, New World hopes to sell designs and concepts to construction companies and developers.

Anyone interested in putting one of these homes on their own piece of land won't have to wait long. A standard home is built in about six to 12 months. With these houses, once land is broken, construction is completed in about 90 days. When the prefabricated house sections are trucked in, a majority of the work is completed at a mesmerizing pace. Neighbors see a concrete foundation in the morning and 80 percent of a house by sunset, said Jupiter, the New World president. Three weeks later, a family can move in.

The most time spent could be on the customized design.

"The design process," Jupiter said, "can take as long as the buyer wishes." ❖