

Affordable 'green' housing springs up in Magna

Efficient cottages » Nonprofit builds homes chock full of energy savings.

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune

Updated:06/19/2009 08:08:04 AM MDT

The Salt Lake Tribune

<http://www.sltrib.com>

Magna » Here's an affordable house whose biggest savings come *after* purchase.

The nonprofit Community Development Corp. of Utah is building the first of five homes for low-income families on a vacant Magna field, loading it with energy-efficient insulation and gadgets that will save the owner hundreds of dollars a year.

Now framed in and expected on the market in 45 days, it boasts three bedrooms, 1,185 square feet plus garage and estimated annual gas and power bills at \$531 (about half the normal tab).

The savings come from rooftop solar collectors that heat water year-round, three layers of different insulation, efficient windows and a modern central swamp cooler that combines evaporative cooling and refrigeration. Such features should help lower-income Utahns qualify for a loan, Community Development construction manager Jeff Hayden said.

"It's something you can take and demonstrate to a mortgage company that it's going to cost you less," he said.

Community Development builds and refurbishes homes for the twin goals of promoting low-income homeownership and restoring neighborhoods. Lately it has focused on Magna, a historic copper mining settlement of 23,000 people in the western Salt Lake Valley that retains a core of Main Street markets, bars, a museum and a theater.

"Magna has an amazing history, exciting cultural aspects and wonderful residents," Community Development executive director Darin Brush said at Thursday's project unveiling. The homes will use brick from the old Webster School -- a landmark that burned -- for external ornamentation.

The project is a block north of Main Street. The single-level cottages won't have much of a yard, but they are next to a large park and golf course.

Both the neighborhood upgrade and the sentimental nod to the school are welcome sights for Melissa Agar, a 26-year-old mother who attended the Webster and keeps two of the bricks at home as souvenirs.

"It's really wonderful," she said, "that they're putting them back into the neighborhood."

Agar would love to buy one of the cottages and is especially envious of the energy savings, but she's not sure her family could afford it. She recently bought another home in the neighborhood.

The nonprofit is building the homes with assistance from private grants and federal Housing and Urban Development funds directed by Salt Lake County. To qualify, prospective purchasers must earn no more than 80 percent of the county's median income. That means, for instance, \$38,000 for an individual, \$43,400 for a couple, \$48,850 for a family of three or \$54,250 for a family of four.

The homes probably will cost \$175,000 to \$180,000, Hayden said. The price includes about \$10,000 for the efficient extras -- \$8,000 for the solar water heater alone -- but the owners will be eligible for thousands in efficiency rebates. For instance, the modern swamp cooler rates a \$750 rebate from Rocky Mountain power.

That rebate likely will grow to \$1,000 for future purchasers as researchers at the University of Utah prove to

the Public Service Commission just how efficient the new coolers are, said Kim Page, regional manager for Portland Energy Conservation. She manages the rebate programs for Rocky Mountain Power and Questar gas. So far in Utah, the technology is in a few Daybreak homes in South Jordan; the U. is monitoring those savings.

The Magna cottages are expected to use 4,305 kilowatt hours and 455 therms of gas each year -- at least 40 percent less than the typical new home. They also will use low-water techniques inside and out.

"It should be just an outstanding bargain," Hayden said.

Two of the five houses will be finished this year. All will be wheelchair-accessible, with one built specifically for wheelchair users.

Both County Mayor Peter Corroon and Lt. Gov. Gary Herbert attended the unveiling and praised the project as smart growth for the community and a smart investment for the prospective owners.

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What's in it?

- » Solar collectors to heat water.
- » High-efficiency refrigerated evaporative cooler.
- » Three layers of foam and Fiberglas insulation.
- » Efficient lighting and appliances.
- » Water-wise irrigation and appliances.
- » Energy bills 40 percent lower than typical.

Source: Community Development Corp. of Utah

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