

REAL ESTATE

RECENTLY SOLD HOMES IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PAGES 2, 3, 6, 7D

Babcock features homes of the future



This Oakview model by Pulte is one of the homes on Innovation Way. It has new energy saving items such as circular vents to circulate air 360 degrees.

Innovation Way is first of its kind in the nation

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For the first time anywhere in the nation, a developer, builders, huge corporations and a power company are coming together to study the homes of the future. This month Innovation Way was unveiled at Babcock Ranch. It features a row of models that highlight some never before used technology along with new technology that is just gaining popularity. Florida Power and Light will study energy use in the homes for two years to see what works best. The builders will look at what buyers want and what is cost effective.

“Innovation Way is a way to change the industry,” said Tom Hoban, Kitson and Partners’ President and chief investment officer.

Syd Kitson, Chairman/CEO of Kitson & Partners, is excited about this new venture.

“We talked to all the builders and nobody has done this anywhere else,” Kitson began. “That is what is exciting about it. You will see that this innovation works, and then you will see it all over the country.”

Kitson stressed that because FPL is collecting data, and not the builders, it will be non-biased and aimed at looking at what is best for the consumer.

See INNOVATION, Page 6D



“The whole point is to make these homes more efficient and less expensive to operate and we need to prove that, and that is what FPL is doing. That is what Babcock Ranch is all about.”

Syd Kitson
Chairman/CEO of
Kitson & Partners

The model homes feature more than innovations, they also showcase popular floorplans and interior design, such as in this Lennar innovative model. PROVIDED PHOTOS

Innovation

Continued from Page 1D

Lennar, Pulte and D.R. Horton built the models. Each builder created two homes with the latest innovations. Lennar also built two identical models without the new technology to use as a control. A final model by Lennar is a high tech, partly deconstructed home to show how some of the items work from within the walls.

“This is not just for Babcock Ranch,” Kitson stressed. “This will improve homes all over the country. When you have these builders that are national brands, they will deploy this faster than any other builders because they are literally in all parts of the country.”

While the builders all created smart homes with things lighting and temperature set and monitored from smart phones and devices, each builder also installed some items unique to them.

Pulte is proud of its air conditioning system that features circular vents instead of the traditional rectangle or square shape. It also has a different system of duct work. Instead of a large duct that branches off to smaller ducts around the house, the Pulte homes have three inch micro ducts that all come out individually from the air handler.

“They all run directly from the air conditioning unit to where they supply air, no mixing boxes, no air exchanges, so it’s a more even temperature,” said Nick Crawford, Pulte’s director of strategic sourcing.

The exterior walls are made from insulated concrete forms. The Sherman Williams paint has air purifying technology for the interior walls. Alexa can control the kitchen faucets. The Silestone quartz countertops contain innovate bacteria resistant technology and is stain, shock and scratch resistant. Artificial turf in the backyard was installed for low maintenance and is environmentally friendly. Permeable pavers for the driveway and walkway allow water to percolate back into the lot instead of into the storm water system. Four batteries in the garage are for power backup instead of a generator.

Pulte also partnered with Ford for one of their models. In the garage is a Ford charging port and a wall of information about the F-150 Lightning, Fords new electric truck.

“We had a connection with our corporate marketing team and the Ford corporate marketing team and Ford was looking for a place to showcase it. And being this is a community of the future, they thought it would be a great partnership,” Crawford explained.

Pulte’s two models are the Oakview and the Cobblestone. The Oakview is a two-story, five bedroom, four bathroom home that spans 3,654 square feet under air. The Cobblestone is a one story house with three bedrooms and two bathroom that spans 2,408 under air.

“We were super pumped to get started,” Crawford said. “We were really excited to reach into our partnerships and our teams to develop the innovation products. Some of these products in both houses are not even available in retail yet, so that is so cool.

We learned so much on what we should and shouldn’t offer. Hopefully some of the stuff will be included in our future homes.”

Lennar’s two models with the innovations are the

Chestnut and the Redbud. The Chestnut is a three bedroom, plus den, two bathroom home that spans 2,086 square feet under air. The Redbud is a five bedroom, four bathroom house modeled as four bedrooms and a den. It spans 3,261 square feet under air. Karen Gough, vice president of sales, is excited to showcase a new type of electrical panel.

“Span reinvented the electrical panel,” Gough began. “It’s become a digital control and monitors everything in your home.”

A computer panel shows all the energy use for every source and every room.

The Greyter system is being studied in the Redbud model. That system takes water that has been used in the shower and bath, filters it and returns it to be used in the toilet.

“It is more water efficient and environmentally friendly,” said Dave Meyers, director of operations for Lennar.

John Bell, cofounder of Greyter, says the system is not only good for the environment, it saves money.

“It just makes sense,” Bell stated. “The typical family of four saves 9,000 gallons per year.”

Lennar is also showcasing a RHEIA small duct system where the HVAC is all run in air conditioned spaces. The system also has a built in ventilating dehumidifier system.

Meyers said Lennar wanted to put a wide variety to innovations into these models to not only test the efficiency, but the cost effectiveness of each item.

“With Lennar we don’t just dip our toe in it, we go all the way,” Meyers stressed.

D.R. Horton built their two models in just 64 days. They put their innovations into the Cordale and the Clearden. The Cordale is a three bedroom, two full and one half bathroom house that spans 2,000 square feet. The Clearden has four bedrooms and two full and one half bathroom and is 2,700 square feet.

Kyle Knight, director of operations for D.R. Horton, pointed out special innovative features that include smart switches that can make windows and glass doors go from clear to frosted. He called up an app on his phone to demonstrate the smart lighting and temperature settings. Push the away button and the lights go off and the windows darken with the frosted setting. Push home and the windows become clear and the lights go on. In the kitchen, two bottom sections of the refrigerator can be set to be refrigerated or freezers. The home has memory foam insulation. A Square D program gives smart information on individual appliances so people can see what is on or off from anywhere at anytime. An energy monitoring system allows a person to see what energy is being used and where.

“It is similar to Span, but this is a monitoring system, Span is the actual panel,” Knight explained. “This is by appliance. You can see what you are doing. Span is monitored by circuits.”

All water that comes through the home is monitored. The system learns the homeowner’s habits in the first 60 days and if something is different it notifies the homeowner of a water usage difference.

Getting so many different companies on board usually isn’t easy.

“How often do you get Lennar, Pulte and D.R. Horton to work together?” questioned Kitson. “They are fierce competitors.”

Yet they are competitors that all jumped at the pros-



The model homes feature more than innovations; they also showcase popular floorplans and interior design, such as in this Lennar innovative model.

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pect of working together on this project.

“We are the three largest builders in the country, building homes side by side,” Crawford exclaimed. “Knowing that all three had the same goals in mind, we started the process for all three to develop a strategy independently from the other two so we would not all be doing the same thing. It was unique. We probably won’t get the opportunity to do this again.”

“It’s fun. I like competition,” Knight added. “I have a lot of friends at Pulte and Lennar so it is a friendly competition. We don’t typically do joint ventures so this is something special.”

Manufacturers were also part of the partnership. A lot of the systems in the homes were donated by the manufacturers that wanted to display and show what their product can do.

The houses also feature motion activated faucets. There are voice activated showers where a person can simply say “turn on the water to 85 degrees.” There is a microwave that can power the entire kitchen. A television becomes a picture frame with photos when not in use.

“If you have a teenage kid and they are in the shower too long, you can turn the water off on them in the shower or turn the water down to 60 degrees,” Hoban explained.

The models are not for sale. They will be monitored by FPL for two years and the data will be used to see what works and what doesn’t and what homeowners want. Even though no one is living in the home, FPL can still collect data as if a family was in residence.

“The beauty of Innovation Way is that not only will

See INNOVATION, Page 7D

Innovation

Continued from Page 6D

visitors be accessing the homes and interacting with the various technologies, including turning on lights, running

faucets and the air conditioning, etc., but also many of the technologies in these homes are application-enabled which allows us to run simulations without physically accessing the homes,” stated Alyssa Ten Eyck, Marketing and Communications for FPL.

Kitson is proud to be the first in the

nation to create this collaborative innovation testing.

“The innovation and some of things put in these homes are truly remarkable,” he exclaimed. “The whole point is to make these homes more efficient and less expensive to operate and we need to prove that, and that is what FPL is do-

ing. That is what Babcock Ranch is all about. It is all about innovation and creating things that will better people’s lives. We are the only ones in the country with this test lab. The hope is that it would be throughout Babcock and throughout the country.”