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Babcock Ranch shows off 'smart' homes

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Homes of the future, now



SUN PHOTOS BY NANCY J. SEMON

Karen Gough, vice president of sales for Span, demonstrates how the electrical panel controls and monitors every home circuit from a smartphone. The panel is in the Lennar test home.

Babcock Ranch's Innovation Way displays next technologies

By **NANCY J. SEMON**
STAFF WRITER

BABCOCK RANCH — For those old enough to remember “The Jetsons,” some of the features of homes in Babcock Ranch’s Innovation Way project might remind them of items that used to be science fiction.

Nick Crawford, of home builder Pulte, said a person could use the app from their bed to command the shower to start.

That smartphone app can also lower shades, turn on or off lights, adjust temperatures and set alarms.

When Syd Kitson, developer of Babcock Ranch along with partner Tom Hoban, decided to invite the nation’s leading builders to design homes using technology of the future, little did they realize, he said, they’d be creating a “mini-EPCOT.”

Kitson, Hoban and FPL’s project director Stevany Cole spoke to *The Daily Sun* inside Pulte Home’s test home, The Cobblestone.

“We approached builders in 2019, and Lennar, Pulte and D.R. Horton said they wanted to be involved in Innovation Way,” Kitson said, referring to the name of the conceptual neighborhood.

Already onboard was Florida Power & Light, which has been working with Babcock Ranch from the beginning when it began to develop the nation’s first solar-powered community.

Kitson called Innovation Way “a testing laboratory.”

“No other community in the country has done anything like it,” he said.

A total of nine houses were built. Lennar built five: two test, two control and one “deconstructed” home in which some panels have been removed to reveal the inner workings. D.R. Horton and Pulte each built two test homes.

Kyle Knight, director of operations for D.R. Horton, said the public can tour the homes by registering at the Discovery Center and obtaining a code for access.

In addition to the remote control features, saving water was also highlighted: Faucets don’t require handles; hands placed under them starts water flow, then stops when hands are removed.



From left, Babcock Ranch developer Syd Kitson, FPL project director of development Stevany Cole, and Kitson’s partner, Tom Hoban, talk about Babcock Ranch’s new neighborhood — Innovation Way, which features homes of the future.



Kyle Knight, director of operations, and Salvatore Valenziano, area sales manager for D.R. Horton, demonstrate the smart appliances in two of their company’s test homes on Innovation Way.

HOMES

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Lennar’s Redbud Model features the Greyter residential water recycling system. John Bell, a partner with the Greyter Home, demonstrated the system, which helps to reduce indoor water consumption by as much as 25% by capturing water from showers, treating it to near-potable quality, and then having it used for a home toilet.

Instead of a generator, battery backups in the garage of some homes on Innovation Way will keep electrical essentials running in the event of severe storms or blackouts.

At Pulte Homes’ Oakview model, a demonstration of an exclusive partnership with Ford’s new all-electric F-150 Lightning truck, showed how the truck could provide backup power to the home.

Representatives from the three home builders were on hand to lead a tour of homes containing new technologies, including:

- Electric vehicle chargers, Wi-Fi enabled recirculating tankless water heaters, in home battery storage systems, and energy systems which monitor for efficiency.
- Home virtual assistants, like Alexa, control anything from water faucets to air conditioning.
- Smart appliances can be programmed to come on, and a refrigerator can even be reconfigured to add more freezer space, Dave Lennar showed off in the Chestnut model.



SUN PHOTOS BY NANCY J. SEMON

Nick Crawford, who is with Pulte’s procurement department, stands next to another feature of the test home — a wall phone charger.

- All the homes have high-efficiency impact windows, state-of-the-art insulation, and air conditioning systems which provide a consistent temperature in each room.

FPL will oversee an analysis of energy efficiency data through the two-year testing period, which began about a year ago.

The control homes’ energy efficiency will be compared to test homes which use the latest technologies. Depending on the results and customer demands, some of the newest technologies might be incorporated into new homes in the future, representatives said.

“The whole point is to make a home more energy efficient,” Kitson said.