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Tapa Homes building 'NEB' subdivision east of Milford

By Monica Scott  
 Staff Reporter

Tapa Homes, based in Dagsboro, Del., will be holding a grand opening and open house for their "No Energy Bill" model home on Saturday, July 17, starting at 11 a.m., and on Sunday, July 18, at their location just east of Milford, Del. Builder Brett Reilly said that, when completed with three additional home models, it will be the first "No Energy" subdivision on the peninsula.

Guests can tour the model, which will have everything from passive solar heating design and Energy Star appliances to a 4,000 kw solar power system installed.



"Almost everything in it has a reason," explained Reilly. "Either it will reduce the cost or produce energy."

He explained that everything from the light-colored shingles to the siding to the dark floors on the interior each have a place in reducing energy use. The crawlspace beneath the home is a conditioned crawlspace, which many builders now say works better than the traditional vented crawlspaces many homes have because they do not allow for air, and, eventually, moisture, to get into the space.

Because a third of the home is below grade, he explained, it can also use geothermal principles of keeping the space at a constant temperature and, in turn, helping to keep the house at a constant temperature, as well. The house also has R-21 insulation in the walls, which he said are 24 inches on center, instead of 16, allowing for more insulation and a better house envelope.

"It took two to three years of designing it," explained Reilly, "to do it 'no energy bill' at an affordable cost." He said he had started on the project earlier, but when the real estate market started to get shaky, he had to put it off a bit. Now, because things are on an upswing and the incentives are there, he said it "just makes sense."

Waiting has also allowed him to take advantage of technologies that are evolving, too. For example, the house will showcase a hybrid hot-water heater, which Reilly said is a third of the cost of a standard water heater and an eighth the cost of a solar hot-water heater. In addition, the home's range, dishwasher and fridge are all Energy Star-certified, as is the lighting system.

Reilly said he got started a few years ago with an interest in energy efficiency because of his problems with his own house.

"My house was leaky and drafty, and my propane and electric bills were high," he explained. "I was building and we were doing an Energy Star home, and one of the guys said I needed an energy audit on my own house. Well, it was enlightening. It was about \$400 and worth every penny."

After learning all about how his own house, which was only a few years old, could be improved, Reilly started to focus more on energy efficiency in the homes he was building and finally thought "Wouldn't it be nice to not have any energy bills?"

The house comes equipped with a 15-SEER variable-speed heat pump and 24 solar panels, each producing 175 watts, that make up the 4,000 kw system. Just those alone will produce about 5,600 kwh of power a year and will assist in reducing greenhouse gases by 4.069 metric tons, according to Flexera, the installer.

The conservative savings per year, explained Reilly, will be about \$733 per year and SRECs (solar renewable energy credits) that are paid to the homeowner will amount to be about \$1,410 per year.

"The total combined savings and income will be about \$2,143 a year," he explained, saying that a much higher number can probably be expected because of the average costs to run a 1,500-square-foot home, both for electric and gas or propane.

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The house costs \$349,950 and sits on 1.5 acres. Reilly explained that other cost advantages include its being eligible for "Delaware Green for Green" funds, where \$3,000 to \$6,000 is available to homeowners who purchase green new-construction homes certified at least Silver by the NAHB Research Center National Green Building Standard (NGBS) or LEED for Homes, in accordance with the guidelines of program.

Delaware Green for Green is a pilot program presented by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, in partnership with the Home Builders Association of Delaware, with stimulus funds administered by the Delaware Sustainable Energy Utility. Reilly said it will also qualify for an energy-efficient mortgage or EEM.

For more information visit [tapahomes.com](http://tapahomes.com) or visit the model located just east of Meding Seafood Restaurant (probably best known for its landmark propeller out front) on the highway in Milford. For more information on Delaware Green for Green visit [www.degreen4green.com](http://www.degreen4green.com).

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