

BUILDING A TREND

by Jessica Luck | Community Editor

Longboat Key is looking a little bit greener these days. From the small changes — compact fluorescent light bulbs and household-cleaning products — to the large — solar energy panels — residences are getting makeovers, as their owners become more eco-friendly and do their part to conserve energy.

The Longboat community — encompassing everything from houses to condominiums to a four-star resort — has begun to embrace the “going-green” trend in a multitude of ways. And, now, with the Key’s first green-community condominium development scheduled to be completed in 2009, going green has even infiltrated the high-end luxury market.

THE PROJECT

Bleu Claire

From the first nail hammered into place, Bleu Claire luxury condominiums will be built green from the ground up. The 11 mid-Key residences, ranging from 4,813 to 7,516 square feet, will be the first on the Key to be constructed adhering to design standards provided by the Florida Green Building Coalition. The condos will boast high-efficiency lighting, building materials using low volatile organic compounds (VOCs), a white, insulated roof to reduce heat absorption, sealed air ducts to maintain air quality, pervious pavers that allow rainwater to seep into the ground for natural drainage, energy-saving wall insulation, highly-rated exterior wall insulation and hot-water recirculation in each residence.

“I think it (building green) is a must,” said Randy Moore, managing partner with developer Crossgate Partners. “I think developments today need to incorporate green aspects, because it’s important to the buyers and it’s important to the community.”

Moore’s company has started green construction on another new development: Bay Street in Sarasota. The first buildings, which will have been built using strict environmentally friendly methods as required by the Florida Green Building Coalition and LEED, will be completed in April 2008 after about a year of construction.

“When we hired a consultant to advise us for Bay Street, we started seeing the importance of this not just from a buyer’s perspective, but we also saw things that were easy for us to do,” Moore said. “While it might increase cost an additional 3% to 5%, the long-term benefits definitely outweigh any costs.”

With its building plans currently under review by the town of Longboat Key, the company hopes to start construction on Longboat Key’s first green condominiums by mid-2008. During construction, Moore’s team will limit the dust-and-pollen outputs, which can linger in air ducts even while owners settle in. Situated on the Gulf of Mexico beach, Bleu Claire will also offer hurricane protection for its residents and will adhere to strict lighting codes that impact loggerhead turtles. Moore said that although prices range from \$3 million and up to \$5 million for the 7,500-square-foot penthouses, the buyers’ incentives will attract customers not only concerned with quality building and luxury homes, but owners also looking to make an impact on the environment and see savings over time.

The benefits of building green start with better air quality and health benefits and lead to large savings over time. Water conservation is seen in a 30% to 50% decrease in the amount of water used, and the units will be 25% to 30% more energy efficient than their non-green counterparts. In addition, each residence will be equipped with proper trash chutes in their apartments that will separate waste materials for recycling so the trend of going green can continue once the construction team is gone and residents have moved in.

See GREEN SCHEME page 10C

Green scheme

A rising trend in building homes and improving homes’ functionality is going green, making sure a home is as eco-friendly as possible. That trend is hitting Longboat Key in a variety of ways.



Courtesy photo

Bleu Claire, Longboat Key’s first condominium community built using green standards, is scheduled to be completed in 2009.

THE RESORT

Longboat Key Club and Resort

The Longboat Key Club and Resort is known as one of the premier resorts in the area — even the state — but it’s taking its title one step further. Currently, the club is seeking green certification by programs with the state of Florida such as the Florida Green Lodging Association and Sarasota County programs such as the Green Business Partnership, which currently has 20 business members in the area. But making the switch to serving all-organic food in the club’s two restaurants and at its two grilles, changing lighting throughout the club to energy-saving compact fluorescent, establishing an all-club recycling program and installing a reverse-osmosis water system is not an easy task according to the 30 members of the club’s Green Committee, which has hopes of implementing these changes within a year’s time.

“It’s a large commitment, but it’s doable,” said Rick Benninghove, the club’s resort manager and chairman of the Green Committee. “It takes a tremendous amount of time and energy to get the process going, as with any culture change, but as time goes on, it becomes a way of life, automatic thinking.”

The first step, serving more organic foods to the club’s members, took one year to implement. Bob Weil, food and beverage director and Green Committee member, said finding the right vendors to supply organic meats, fish and vegetables is an ongoing process. Currently the club’s Spike ‘N’ Tees restaurant serves 80% organic food, while dinner at Sands Pointe restaurant is also about 80%.

“It is such an undertaking to do it right,” Weil said.

The switch to organic food options was met with much less resistance than originally thought. Weil started with Spike ‘N’ Tees, replacing the golfer crowd’s beloved hamburgers and salad bar options with organic beef burgers and organic greens. No one even noticed the switch, and members even began ordering the more eco-friendly options, a sign that support for the movement is out there.



Jessica Luck

The Longboat Key Club and Resorts Green Committee held its inaugural meeting Nov. 1 to discuss ways the club can become more environmentally friendly.

“We want to leave our thumbprint on the green movement,” Weil said.

The Green Committee’s first official meeting was Nov. 1, but Benninghove said the Leadership Committee on the property has been discussing plans for the last year to implement green ways of doing things on site. Despite upfront costs that are likely to occur, Benninghove said the 75% energy savings from lighting alone and cutting down on waste through recycling are huge savings.

“Being one of the largest pieces of real estate and one of the largest employers on the Key, we have a real moral obligation to do that,” Benninghove said. “It’s something to work toward.”

Communication is a main aspect of the green project for the Key Club. Not only are the club’s 400 employees beginning to advocate for environmentally-friendly practices, but the club hopes that by making this commitment it will also be able to educate its guests on practices they can implement once they return home, such as printing things out on two-sided paper, thus continuing a growing trend.

“Communication is just getting people to do things differently, and it doesn’t have to cost money,” Benninghove said. “True savings are a mixed bag, and, in the long run, we do expect a challenge for us to keep push-

GREEN SCHEME continued from page 1C

THE HOUSE

Rusty Chinnis

The move to going green for contractor and Longboat Key Village resident Rusty Chinnis began about 20 years ago. At that time, Chinnis owned Solar Concepts, which provided customers with solar-energy options for heating pools and domestic water heaters. The business lasted about five years until tax credits for energy-saving devices were cut. It wasn't until the last few months, however, that Chinnis made the decision to not only offer green-building concepts with his contracting business, but also adopt the green lifestyle in his own home.

"It's a feel-good thing," Chinnis said about going green. "I decided if I'm going to offer clients different strategies to do this, then I have to do it myself."

Chinnis started with smaller changes, as most people do, and began reusing plastic bags and bringing his own bags to the grocery. Whole Foods offers 10 cents off a purchase to customers who bring in their own bags. The next step was replacing household-cleaning products with



Photos by Jessica Luck

Longboat Key resident and contractor **Rusty Chinnis** shows off the EarthBoxes at his home that grow everything from tomatoes and herbs to this fig tree.

environmentally friendly cleaners for everything from dishwashing detergent to car cleaners. Chinnis said he saw that when he cleaned his truck, the cleaning products would run out to the street, down the drain and filter out into Sarasota Bay. And, Chinnis said the switch from a hot-water tank to a more expensive tankless electric heater that only heats water on demand was well worth it.

"It starts to pay for itself right away," Chinnis said.

With his business, Chinnis said he has begun to replace outside lights at many condos on the Key with energy-saving LED lights, which save not only energy but also reduce the amount of heat given off that can force air-conditioning systems to work harder. And the newest product he's excited about is the Brac Greywater System, which filters water from the sink for flushing toilets in the house, a 40% consumption savings.

But the changes don't just stop in the house. Outside, Chinnis has installed a solar-heating panel (passive-solar batch heater) on the roof of his house, which heats up to 40 gallons of water as needed, and has replaced his yard's irrigation system with a micro-spray system that only directs water where it is needed.

EarthBoxes have also been installed all around the yard, which grow everything from plants to herbs, tomatoes and even a fig tree.

In a world increasingly concerned about not only the environment of today but also of the future, Chinnis said he sees environmental conservation as something with staying power. Replacing compact fluorescent bulbs with LED lights, using low VOC paint and replacing hardwood floor with faster-growing bamboo flooring is something everyone can do.

"Really, why would you not do it?" Chinnis said. "It's fun and it becomes addicting."

THE CONDOMINIUM

Windward Bay

The 151-unit Windward Bay condominium has also joined the green movement, in a natural way. About a year ago, unit owners began hearing pitches from the Grounds Committee about ways to conserve water. The condo has more open land than most on the Key — 60,000 square feet that needed to be irrigated. With half a million blades of grass to water once a week, the condo's well water was in high demand. But by removing the grass and non-native Florida plants on the south end of the property and replacing it with 30 varieties of Florida-friendly and Florida-native plants and shrubs, the residents have seen not only a decline in the water used, but are now looking for more ways to become a little greener.

"We thought the concept would take two years to achieve a nice full look, but in two to three months it had filled out," said Jerry Gornowicz, chairman of the Grounds Committee.

After replanting the grassy area in May, Gornowicz said plans are in the works for redoing a second landscape zone on the property as well. And the new landscaping has added benefits beyond saving money. Now birds and butterflies are more prominent in the area, and residents can watch the action by sitting on a new bench on the edge of the bay, which is reachable by a pathway that winds through the newly landscaped zone.

In addition, Windward Bay has also looked into researching solar panels for residences, and now heats both pools on site with energy-saving methods such as a geothermal-energy heat pump, which saves about \$5,000 to \$6,000 a year according to Windward Bay Manager Steve Gooding.

"The whole point is to create a community outlook and to get away from using fossil fuels as much as possible," Gooding said.



The Grounds Committee at Windward Bay installed a new gravel path in May, leading from the south end of the property out to Sarasota Bay. The walk is now lined with Florida-native and Florida-friendly plants, shrubs and trees.

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KITCHEN - FAMILY ROOM

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• BUTTONWOOD HARBOUR
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• PELICAN HARBOUR
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For Your Consideration

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