

Builders Lead the Way on Solar, But You Can Get it Free in an Existing Home

Last week I attended an expo of new home builders and was impressed at the emphasis on sustainability, including solar-equipped or solar ready homes.

Most of the builders were promoting their "green" features and their low HERS scores.

"HERS" stands for Home Energy Rating System, and a HERS score of 100 represents the energy rating of a home built to cur-

rent building codes. A home built to "Energy Star" standards (which entails such things as improved insulation, windows and highly efficient appliances) would earn a HERS score of 70. A "net-zero" home would have a HERS score of zero.

Meritage Homes is clearly the leader in building energy efficient homes, claiming such distinctions as "First Energy Star Production Builder," "First Net-Zero Production

Builder," and "First Builder with Community HERS Rating Under 40." None of the other builders I met at last week's expo were quoting HERS scores under 60, but all were boasting many "green" features and some were building homes with solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Meritage is not currently building anywhere in Jefferson County, but has a half dozen communities in Denver's southeast suburbs and another half dozen in the northern suburbs. You can find them online at www.MeritageHomes.com.

It's great that builders are creating this kind of market consciousness regarding energy efficiency and solar powered homes. However, I am still finding that energy efficiency and sustainability is the last thing on the minds of home buyers of existing homes.

Most buyers of existing homes

are impressed by kitchens, bathrooms, stainless steel appliances (forget Energy Star ratings), hardwood floors, slab granite, etc., and are, for the most part, unimpressed by sales pitches such as for the solar-powered home shown here.

The result of this, which I've complained about before, is that homes with solar systems and other energy features are selling for no more, and sometimes less, than homes without such features.

The home at right, for example, is priced competitively with homes which do not have free electricity, even though that represents a savings of thousands of dollars per year to the homeowner.

Because of this disinterest, I tell those who are interested in solar, "Don't install a PV system on your current home — buy an existing home with solar and you'll get it free!" As a PV booster, I hate to say it, but it's true.

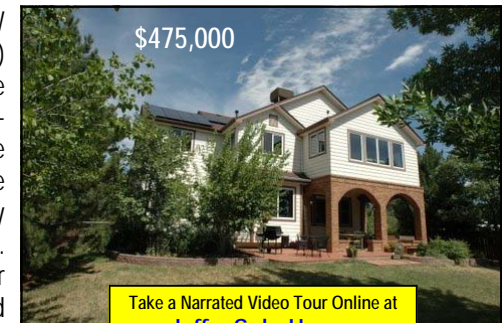
Sellers recoup little, if any, of their investment.

This Week's Featured Listing

Own This Home & You'll Get Your Electricity Free

This home's 7.2 kW solar photovoltaic (PV) system (barely visible in this backyard picture) meets all of the electrical needs of the seller and will probably meet your needs too. You'll pay just \$7 per month to be connected to the electrical grid.

Inside, you'll find a spacious home with two master suites, a family room which doubles as a home theater, hot water baseboard and radiant floor heat, dimmable LED can lighting, radon mitigation, hardwood and tile flooring, and more. It sides to open space and backs to agricultural land. Very quiet! It's at 16488 W. 55th Drive. Open Saturday 1-4 p.m.



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Serving the West Metro Area

Jim Smith

Broker/Owner

Golden Real Estate, Inc.

DIRECT: 303-525-1851

EMAIL: Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com

17695 South Golden Road, Golden 80401

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