

Builder to experiment with computerization

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Of The Press-Tribune

ROCKLIN — Energy experts hope a computerized house planned for Stanford Ranch will revolutionize the building market.

If approved by the Rocklin City Council, the energy-saving house will be the first of its kind in South Placer.

Clay Schmidt, a marketing engineer for Pacific Gas & Electric Co., told the City Council recently the company was working with GLM Custom Homes on the computerized house. The electric company will monitor the house for two years, determining its energy-effectiveness.

"This is what homes will be like in the year 2000 and 2100," said Garen McCune, owner of GLM Custom Homes, builder of the prototype house.

Rocklin was chosen for the site of the planned house for two reasons, Schmidt told the council. The first was the modern homes available in Stanford Ranch. The second was the city's proximity to Sacramento — and the Capitol. Builders hope to gain the attention of legislators who recognize the area's continuing growth in population and may become interested in the energy-saving concept.

"Along with that growth comes a tremendous demand for electricity," he said.

Schmidt said the planned 29,000-square-foot house has both interior and exterior facets that make it energy-efficient. The two-story, four-bedroom house could be completed in late December, depending on permit approv-

als by the city. Ground-breaking is scheduled for mid-September.

The monitoring period will tell developers if the house is effective. No one will live in the home during the testing period.

Tours by state legislators, building officials and city councils are planned for the prototype house once it is completed.

The house's automation system is directed by the homeowner, controlled through a touch-screen system. It gives pre-programmed commands, like automatically closing window shades at a preset time each day.

"We're making sure it's very, very user-friendly," Schmidt said. "You can program it so that the air conditioning won't come on when energy cost 11 cents per kilowatt. It'll wait until it goes down to, say, 10 cents per kilowatt."

Inside the walls, ceiling, floors and pipes are reinforced insulation — heavier than standard insulation measures that will keep heat and cool air from escaping. The unit will also be supplied with high-efficiency heating and air conditioning units.

Rooms are installed with lower-than-normal wattage light bulbs. The kitchen and garage will have individual recycling units to encourage recycling.

Builders plan to surround the house with large oak trees to shade it from the heat. Landscaping will be primarily drought-tolerant plants requiring little watering during the year.

Standard cost for the designed home would be about \$450,000. The automation system will add as much as \$100,000 to the price tag.