

Sign of times: Accepted offers for energy-saving homes

By Thomas Content of the Journal Sentinel

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Buyers have been found for two homes that are packed with energy-saving features and solar panels.

The home that produces its own energy already has a buyer.

Mark Neumann of Neumann Developments said an offer on the \$350,000 home was signed a few days after Earth Day for the home in Ixonia that is expected to produce enough solar power to meet the home's energy needs and to charge a plug-in hybrid electric car in the garage.

"To sell it before it's finished like this is a really good sign," Neumann said. "I really think we're on the right track when we can show people that it is more cost-effective to live in this home at the same time that it's doing the right thing for the environment."

Separately, the energy-minded renovation designed to take a foreclosed home and make it a model of energy efficiency has also found a buyer.

An offer has been accepted and the deal will go through pending approval of the buyer's financing, said Jeremy Belot of Layton Boulevard West Neighbors.

In a partnership with Focus on Energy, Johnson Controls, We Energies and others, the home was renovated to boost efficiency and add a solar hot water system.

The energy-savings made the home an "energy breakthrough," according to energy consultant Keith Williams, as the Milwaukee bungalow now matches energy-efficient new construction in its new performance.

In Jefferson County, Mark Neumann and his son, Matt, came up with the idea of building an "energy-producing home" after touring the Wisconsin Trend home last year. The energy producing home will be featured on the Metropolitan Builders Association's 2009 Parade of Homes in August, along with other green-built and Energy Star-rated homes.

Neumann, a former congressman who is planning to compete against Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, has a second home planned down the street in the Autumn Ridge development in Ixonia.

Construction on the second home is expected to start by the end of this May.