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The Green Builder Vision House highlights views of Lake Apopka

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Roberto and Cyndi Carrion designed their Montverde home to be a journey of sights and sounds: shimmering lake views, rough cypress ceilings, soothing water features and meditative silence.

They built it to be strong and practical, with energy-efficient features, eco-friendly materials, hurricane-resistant construction and water-conservation ideas. They focused on details that would enhance the home's aesthetics and function.

Now that it's complete, the Carrions are eager to move into the three-level, 5,400-square-foot home on Lake Apopka. But first, we get to see what they have accomplished.

The Lake County home is the third in a series of demonstration projects known as the Green Builder Vision House Series, sponsored by the publisher of *Green Builder Magazine*. It was built to coincide with the International Builders' Show, which ended Saturday, in Orlando.

The house will be open during the Lake County Parade of Homes Saturday through March 2.

Here's a preview.

What you see

- Mostly, you see a whole lot of Lake Apopka. The rooms that will be used most often — family room, office, master bedroom, game room and meditation room — were situated to offer the best views of the lake. Note how a mirror was placed opposite sliding glass doors in the master bedroom to reflect the lake scene.
- From the front porch, a sizable picture window offers a view across the family room and outdoors to the lake. That wasn't planned; it was a happy coincidence. The original purpose of the window was to showcase the annual Christmas tree "so when you drive up at night, it welcomes you home," Carrion says.
- Six skylights above the central staircase draw the eye upward and flood the house with light, which shines down onto a decorative tile medallion at the foot of the staircase. A trio of stained-glass windows in the master bedroom were placed where they could best capture the sunlight.
- In the master-bedroom closet, lights with timers were installed to illuminate the glass block windows visible from the front of the home. At night, "it'll look like sparkling diamonds," Carrion says.

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What you don't see

- A lot of messy cords. The Carrions installed electrical outlets inside the drawers and the medicine cabinet so hair dryers and other electrical items can remain plugged in and ready to use.
- Bulky TV sets. Carrion built recesses in the walls for the flat-screen TVs; then he built more recesses within the recesses. Confused? We'll explain. He wanted TV sets in the family room, office and master suite to be flush with the wall, so he built niches in which to place them. The smaller recesses house the cords. Sounds like a happy TV ending.

What you hear

- "Water is a soothing, relaxing design element," Carrion says. "I really wanted to try to [incorporate] the sound of water as much as possible." Even before you step inside, you'll cross a bridge over a lighted koi pond with two gushing waterfalls. Inside the entry, you'll be greeted by the sound of water spilling from a double-sided fountain that's also visible from the dining room.
- Open the sliding glass doors at the back of the family room and you'll hear splashing water from the vanishing-edge pool and the waterfall in the spa. Take the winding trail through the banana trees down to the boat dock and sit a spell. The sound of lapping water will make you forget about the alligators hovering in the surrounding conservation area.

What you don't hear

- Distracting noise — if you're in the office, master bedroom, game room, meditation room or home theater. They're soundproof.

"I like my music loud," Carrion says. "I can crank up that [home theater] system, and the people above are not going to be able to hear me."

- The wall between the master bedroom and bath consists of drywall "that has a metal plate in the center of it and standard batt insulation," Carrion says. To make sure nary a sound squeezes through, all penetrations for electrical wiring and pipes were filled with spray-foam insulation.

It's better than a "do not disturb" sign.

What's green

- The house was built to comply with green-building and disaster-resistant standards set forth by several organizations including the National Association of Home Builders, the Florida Green Building Coalition and the "Fortified ... for safe living" program. The landscaping plan also showcases eco-sensitive ideas recognized by two state programs: Florida Water Star and the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods.
- Many of the features that qualify the house as environmentally friendly aren't immediately apparent. Cistern tanks are hidden underground, for example, and the mold-resistant drywall is buried in the walls. But the furnishings, fabrics and wall coverings were selected for their earth-friendly qualities, so take a look at those.
- Don't miss the basement. That's a rare feature in Florida homes, and this one houses a game room and state-of-the-art home theater. Plus, it's fortified to serve as a hurricane bunker. Always a plus in Florida.

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