



Almanac photo by Michelle Le

Broker Bryan McVay takes a tour of Clarum Homes' new low-energy home in Menlo Park.

## Clarum: Home cuts energy use 90%

By Caitlin Moyles

Special to the Almanac

Insulation, airtight window frames, solar power, and a heat-recovery ventilation system helped Clarum Homes earn its first certification for building a passive house that the company says cuts energy use by 90 percent.

Several hundred guests, including architects and engineers, toured the home, located at 1206 North Lemon Ave. in Menlo Park, and asked about its environmental and health benefits on June 2, five days before the 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath house goes on the market.

John Suppes, CEO of Clarum Homes, along with Director of Construction Sean Misskelley and consultant Katy Hollbacher, guided visitors through the 3,300-square-foot, Mission-style home and answered questions, while visitors mingled over a sandwich buffet.

The airtight, energy-efficient home needs 90 percent less energy annually for heating than the average U.S. household, Mr. Suppes said. He added that although the California-based company has built passive-inspired houses in the past, this is its first home to meet all standards — set by Passive House Institute US (PHIUS) — for space-heating demand and total energy use per square foot, as well as airtightness.

Structural insulated panels retain heat by using the same material as Styrofoam coffee cups, and triple-glazed windowpanes from Austria create a thermal envelope that reduces heating costs, he said. Sealants and a liquid barrier applied to the outside of the panels maintain airtightness.

Air inside the house goes through a heat recovery ventilator that keeps temperature and humidity constant by exchanging the air nine times every 24 hours, and recovering 90 percent of the heat from air exhausted to the outside of the house, said Matt Groves, an engineer for the company that supplied the ventilator.

The home also cuts energy costs by using three solar panels on the roof to provide 90 percent of the power needed to heat water, and 40 percent to heat space, according to Clarum. In addition, solar tubes replace ceiling lights in dark areas such as closets.

Although the passive house cost 4 to 5 percent more to build than normal Clarum homes, which also feature sustainable technologies, energy savings will recapture the cost, Mr. Suppes said. He plans to build and retrofit several passive houses for clients in Menlo Park and Palo Alto in the near future.

Ms. Hollbacher emphasized

that a home earns certification from PHIUS as a passive house based on the building's performance, rather than prescribed features.

"Something that's really nice about the standard is that there are three absolute numbers for heat demand, energy use, and air tightness. It doesn't matter if you're in Germany, or if you're in Minnesota, Truckee, or (Menlo Park), you have to meet them," she said, adding that because the passive house standards were developed in Germany, they're relatively easy to achieve in California's mild climate.

Although passive house regulations don't include a standard for water efficiency — an area which Clarum addressed in its Menlo Park house with structured zone plumbing, a recirculating hot water system that reduces time spent waiting for water to heat, and drought-resistant plants — Mr. Suppes and Ms. Hollbacher said they believe the passive house standard is currently the most advanced standard for green building.

"There's just no reason not to do this," Ms. Hollbacher said.

Visit [menlopassive.com](http://menlopassive.com) for more information about the Menlo passive house.

Visit [passivehouse.us](http://passivehouse.us) to learn more about the construction standards.

arrest him, according to police.

He was booked into county jail, where he faces robbery charges. The German tourist's purse was returned to her without anything missing. No injuries were reported, police said.

— Bay City News Service

## Teens catch alleged purse snatcher

A Menlo Park teenager was chased down Saturday, June 4, and held for police by two 17-year-old Good Samaritans after he allegedly snatched a tourist's purse, according to East Palo Alto police.

Joshua Wallbank Mahoni,

18, allegedly grabbed the bag at about 3:15 p.m. from a 20-year-old German woman at the Ravenswood 101 Retail Center at 1771 East Bayshore Road in East Palo Alto, police said.

Two youths ran after him and helped responding officers

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



### What Most Buyers Want

**Dear Monica: I am about to list my older character home and I know that it needs some work; e.g., fumigation for termites, some foundation work, and other incidental work. Would you recommend I do this work before putting the house on the market?**

Julie H.

Dear Julie: The majority of buyers now want properties that are in good condition and updated. This is especially true if the property is older because buyers will be concerned that not only would the obvious work need to be done but that there would likely be additional work that hasn't come to light yet. Most of them will be too concerned that the scope of work will be too great and too expensive. You can eliminate much of

their concern by taking care of the major items that need attention. If you have owned the property a long time, this work should have been done along the way. If you don't do any work on the house, any buyers who make offers will want to offer a much lower price in order to cover the cost of the work they know must be done.

The exception to this would be if the property is very well located and on a good-sized lot and thus its value is primarily in the lot. Then you don't have to do much work at all to the property because the buyer will probably tear it down and build new. Once you determine whether the value is in the house or just in the lot, you will be able to decide what to do.

For answers to any questions you may have on real estate, you may e-mail me at [mcorman@apr.com](mailto:mcorman@apr.com) or call 462-1111, Alain Pinel Realtors. I also offer a free market analysis of your property. [www.MonicaCorman.com](http://www.MonicaCorman.com)

**RJ's Upholstery**  
650-591-3424  
1064 Cherry Street  
San Carlos, CA 94070

**Kathy's Drapery Plus Roman Shades**  
650-591-0220  
Better Choice Since 1960  
mail@rjsupholstery.com

### TOWN OF WOODSIDE

2955 WOODSIDE ROAD  
WOODSIDE, CA 94062

PLANNING COMMISSION

June 15, 2011

7:30 PM

#### PUBLIC HEARING

2. Greg and Nancy Serrurier CEQA2009-0002, SDES2011-0001, GRAD2011-0004 & MERG2007-004  
503 Old La Honda Road Planner: Deborah Dory

Review and approval/denial of a Mitigated Negative Declaration, a Lot Merger to merge all underlying lots into a single 13.2 acre property in the SCP-7.5 zoning district, grading in excess of 1,500 cubic yards pursuant to WMC 151.22, the demolition of the existing buildings onsite, and construction of a new 5,804 square foot main residence with a 592 SF attached garage, an 879 square foot pool house, a swimming pool, a new septic system, a new driveway, and associated landscaping on a property, and located in the Western Hills. The proposal includes the vacation of a private access easement and public utilities easements that are not in use.

3. Dan Stoddard CEQA2011-009 & LLA2011-012  
1020 Godetia Drive Planner: Sage Schaan

Review and approval/denial of a Mitigated Negative Declaration and a Lot Line Adjustment (LLA) between two properties in a Suburban Residential (SR), one acre minimum zoning district. Proposed Lot A (Portion of Lot 7) would become 2.57 acres, and proposed Lot B (Portion of Lot 8) would become 2.15 acres. The proposed project does not include any grading or construction.

All application materials are available for public review at the Woodside Planning and Building Counter, Woodside Town Hall, weekdays from 8:00 – 10:00 AM and 1:00 – 3:00 PM, or by appointment. For more information, contact the Woodside Planning and Building Department at (650) 851-6790.