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Condo development adds twist to green building

Solar systems cut costs for units at 2020 Lawrence

By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News
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David Zucker is shining light on a super-energy-efficient condo community with a \$20 million development near Coors Field.

Zucker says it will cost buyers less to purchase solar photovoltaic systems with their units than to buy them without the PV systems.

An innovative deal with Countrywide Financial will give buyers with the roof-mounted, 2-kilowatt PV systems a quarter-point break on 30-year mortgages. That interest rate cut, combined with electrical savings, tax credits and rebates from Xcel Energy, would mean an estimated savings of \$417 a year.

Zucker, a principal of Zocalo Community Development, will break ground on the 60-unit 2020 Lawrence project early next year. Twenty of the units, which range in price from the \$290,000s to the mid-\$800,000s, have sold.

"I think it sounds great," said Amy Ellsworth, energy division director for the Center for ReSource Conservation, a nonprofit group based in Boulder.

"It's very innovative," she added. "I can't imagine a buyer not taking the solar option."

In addition, Zucker will install a 50,000-watt PV system that will produce enough energy to power all the common areas at 2020 Lawrence.

This is Zucker's second green infill development.

His \$17.4 million, 60-unit RiverClay development under construction in the Jefferson Park neighborhood at 2195 Decatur St. will be the first condo project in the Rocky Mountain region to get a silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design designation from the U.S. Green Building Council, he said.

2020 Lawrence also will be a silver LEED and the first condo community in the region to receive a Near-Zero Energy Home designation, Zucker said.

Although the developments are "green," they will not produce a lot of green for him.

Other green developers, from John Keith at Harvard Communities to Mark Meiser at Meiz Development, also have found that to be the case.

"It's not like I spend an extra \$30,000 on energy features to make \$40,000. It's more like I spend the extra money and I lose \$10,000," said Meiser, on a recent tour of green townhomes he built on the 2500 block of West 43rd Avenue.

"I do it because it is the right thing to do," Meiser said.

That's a philosophy shared by Zucker. "I want to be as gentle to the Earth as possible," he said.



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Community
Development

A drawing shows the 60-unit, \$20 million development called 2020 Lawrence that will break ground early next year near Coors Field. The condominiums range in price from the \$290,000s to the mid-\$800,000s, and 20 of them have been sold.

In addition to solar, the 2020 Lawrence development will be full of energy-saving and sustainable features, such as wool carpets that don't produce "off-gas" the way most synthetic carpets do. Other such features include low-volatile organic paints and adhesives, which eliminate the harmful "new home" smell. He will try to recycle about two-thirds of the construction waste at the site.

Zucker is even doing something about the 15 percent to 22 percent of the electricity in a typical home that is used by things that are plugged in, even when not being operated, such as TVs, toasters, cell-phone chargers and other "energy vampires."

He will install a screen in each home to show where the energy is being used, and there will be a switch to turn off nonessential items, for when the residents are not at home.

"It's great to have all of these features, but what we really have to encourage is having people make habitual changes," Zucker said.

Ellsworth, of the Boulder conservation group, said that's an impressive feature she hopes other developers will embrace.

"It will have a great impact to have the kind of visual," she said. "And he's taking it to the next step by having a switch."

2020 Lawrence at a glance

- **Units:** 60
- **Cost:** \$20 million
- **Unit sizes:** 1,001 square feet, plus 202-square-foot balcony; and 1,760 square feet, plus 293-square-foot balcony
- **Prices:** \$290,000s to mid-\$800,000s.

Four reasons you can't say no to solar

1 Uncle Sam will give you a **\$2,000 personal tax credit** with the forms provided.

2 **Xcel Energy will pay 60 percent of the upfront cost** of the photovoltaic system, reducing the net cost to \$6,000 from \$17,000. Excess power is sold back to Xcel, and the electric meter spins backward when that happens.

3 You'll **save an average of \$270 a year** on electricity.

4 You are, in effect, buying electricity at a **fixed cost**, so the more energy prices rise, the more valuable your condo becomes. Countrywide also will reduce your mortgage by a quarter-percent for the solar home.

Solor condo fun facts

- Photovoltaic systems would produce enough power to brew **230 cups** of gourmet coffee, toast **150 bagels**, blend **4,850 smoothies** and power **15 laptop computers** for 24 consecutive hours.
- Living in a solar-powered home is the equivalent of planting **200 aspen trees**.

Source: Zocalo Community Development

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