



## Cooper City project hopes green homes are golden

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Cascada bills itself as the first neighborhood in South Florida developed to meet five "green" building standards. That translates to savings of about \$250 to \$500 a year on the water and electric bill per home and a smaller carbon footprint for the area, developers said.

The 148-townhome project is being built in Cooper City by Minto Communities, of Ottawa.

The lawns use drip irrigation instead of sprinklers to save water. Home appliances are Energy-Star rated to consume less electricity. And carpets and paints contain and emit less chemicals.

Minto is adding green features into new projects in Florida to meet growing consumer demand, to differentiate itself from competitors and to improve quality for residents, according to executives.

"It's a smart move," said Brad Hunter, South Florida director for Metrostudy, a housing market research firm. In today's tough market, builders need to distinguish themselves, especially from short sales on existing homes. Green features are an improvement not available in older properties, he said. While most consumers don't buy homes because they are green, families like the savings that come from energy efficiency. And the younger generations place more emphasis on the environment in their buying decisions, Hunter said.

"The challenge is to balance green with affordability of the new homes," said Hunter.

Minto is selling the new green townhomes starting from the \$220,000's on its smallest 2-bedroom, 2-bath unit. Its largest three-bedroom, three-bath units are priced in the 250,000s.

Mark and Gilda Finkelstein already have signed up to buy one of the townhomes. The Cooper City residents want to downsize from a single family home, as one child heads off to college, and they like the idea of not worrying about landscaping.

"The green features are a plus. Anything you can do to save on water and electricity is good," said Mark Finklestein, 53, a postal clerk. "But it wasn't our motivator," added wife Gilda, 42, a paralegal.

Minto said it has contracts on 13 townhomes so far, a number researcher Hunter calls "impressive" in today's market. The formal opening of Cascada's model homes is set for Saturday.