

# Mount Desert Islander

- Real Estate
- Help Wanted
- Classifieds
- Businesses
- Audio / Video

### Inside

- Frontpage
- The News
- Maritime
- Sports
- Health
- Obituaries
- Archive

### Opinion

- Editorial
- Letters
- Blogs

### Entertainment

- Arts and Living
- Calendar
- Photo Gallery
- MDI Wallpapers

### About Us

- Advertising
- Contact

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## 'Green' houses are springing up

Written by Robert Levin

Friday, May 16, 2008



Several more foundations, now under construction, will complete this section of "walk-to" houses, one part of the Northeast Creek Neighborhood being developed by the Bar Harbor Housing Authority.—ROBERT LEVIN PHOTO

**BAR HARBOR** — The Northeast Creek Neighborhood, the workforce housing development now under construction in Town Hill, is a beehive of activity these days. Everywhere crews in orange hardhats work bucket loaders, dump trucks, and backhoes, and the sounds of hammering, stapling, sawing, and beeping from reversing trucks fill the air.

Work has gone quickly since it began this winter. Over the past three months, 28 foundations have been constructed, leaving the development just three basements shy of the 31 total that will be built, said Mike Allen, ground crew foreman with Harold MacQuinn, Inc. Construction.

Houses seem like they are springing up daily. The development will take two years to complete, but the first three houses are slated to be ready June 1, said Terry Kelley, executive director of the Bar Harbor Housing Authority.

While many environmentally friendly components are built into the houses, one feature may stand out more than any other in the eyes of potential buyers; a high degree of energy efficiency. Eight houses were kept heated last winter, at an average cost of \$500-worth of propane each.

"And that's with doors open, extension cords running through windows, you know, typical construction," Mr. Kelley said.

As the development takes shape and word gets out about the efficient design, interest has perked up. Mr. Kelley has been quite busy fielding phone calls, distributing information, and



A worker for Bowman Brothers Construction installs cement board siding on a house at the Northeast Creek Neighborhood recently. Cement board is a more expensive, but more environmentally-friendly option than vinyl siding.—ROBERT LEVIN PHOTO

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### BREAKING NEWS!

#### Newspaper chain sold

**ROCKLAND** — Courier Publications, a division of South Carolina-based Crescent Publishing and owner of the Bar Harbor Times, has been sold for the third time in less than 10 years.

#### UPDATED: Boat sinks, father and son rescued

**SOUTHWEST HARBOR** — A father and son aboard the fishing vessel Midnight abandoned ship in a life raft Tuesday after the vessel caught fire in an area thick with fog, 20 miles off the coast at about 9 a.m. The vessel reportedly sank a short time later.

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### Features

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showing people around the site at an increasing frequency this spring, he said.

Twelve houses are under purchase-and-sale agreements now, Mr. Kelley said, and he is working actively with four families on purchasing other houses. The three dwellings that are due to be completed by June 1 were built on spec.

Described in sales materials as an "eco-friendly village," the Northeast Creek Neighborhood is far from a typical subdivision. The 31 homes being built will be clustered on just 6 acres of land, with many as close to each other as the houses on a downtown street.

The close proximity of the homes to one another is just part of the "green" building plan for the development. By clustering the houses, 25 acres of surrounding land, also part of the neighborhood, will be conserved in its natural, wooded state.

As a matter of further conservation, 175 acres were protected in a partnership with Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Acadia National Park when the housing authority originally purchased the land.

Environmentally friendly components are featured in many aspects of the homes, at both the construction and the design phases.

New framing technologies were used to reduce thermal bridging and increase wall thickness, allowing for extra insulation. The walls have an insulating value of R30, while ceilings are R50.

A Rinnai propane heating system installed on the first floor heats the entire house. As an option, buyers can have a pellet stove installed.

The exterior sheathing used in construction is free from volatile organic compounds (VOCs), as are the kitchen cabinets. The finish applied to the wood floors and paint used on the walls are also VOC-free.

Fly ash, a by-product of coal-fired power plants, was used in the foundation concrete to make it more durable. Every ton of fly ash recycled is equal to four months of carbon emissions from a typical car, according to housing authority materials.

All framing lumber was harvested within 300 miles of Bar Harbor, a step also geared toward reducing carbon emissions. Also, as much construction waste as possible is being recycled.

The homes in the Northeast Creek Neighborhood are geared toward year-round, Mount Desert Island families, and are meant to be affordable to those of moderate income levels. The most basic start at a price of \$160,000, with a number of options available.

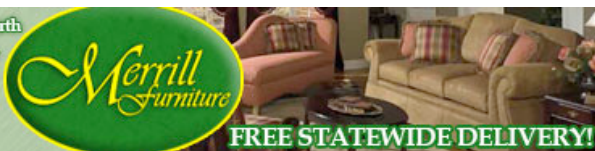
To qualify, at least one member of the family needs to work on Mount Desert Island; household income makes purchasing a home here at full market value difficult, and pre-approval from a financial institution for a mortgage is necessary to qualify.

For interested buyers who do not meet the eligibility requirements, several homes in the development will be available at full market rate.

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