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When Its Mood Is Green, So Are You



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Most homeowners have a general sense of whether or not they are being energy efficient, a hunch confirmed or disproved when the monthly bills arrive. But occupants of a prefabricated house designed by Kaplan Thompson Architects, a firm in Portland, Me., will receive real-time feedback through a system Phil Kaplan, one of the architects, describes as “an update on the mood ring.”

The super-insulated, solar-heated BrightBuilt Barn is equipped with a device that analyzes electricity use and communicates that data to a skirt of LEDs affixed to the base of the home’s exterior. If the house is on track to create more energy than it uses, the lights turn green; yellow is a borderline condition, and red means the owners should shut off appliances or turn down the heat.

The first BrightBuilt Barn was recently completed for a client in Rockport, Me., for around \$300,000, but Mr. Kaplan is now offering a base model for under \$200,000. He envisions a world in which BrightBuilt dwellers across the country can compare their energy use — a kind of eco-version of keeping up with the Joneses. Information: (207) 842-2888 or brightbuiltbarn.com.

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