

University develops plans for energy-efficient housing

■ **HOME:** The Cascadia is said to be more affordable and efficient than other homes of its size

By Daniel Pearson
Higher Education Reporter

Affordable, energy-efficient housing may soon become a reality for the more than 150,000 Oregon families buying their first home.

Researchers at the University's Center for Housing Innovation have developed plans for a three-bedroom house known as the Cascadia, which uses Stressed Skin Insulating Core (SSIC) panels for the exterior walls and roof.

"We're excited that we can share this innovative house plan with developers and home builders in the Willamette Valley," said Charlie Brown, director of the University Energy Studies in Buildings Laboratory. "It's affordable and it uses 20 percent

less energy than other houses of comparable size."

SSIC panels are made of a rigid foam core sandwiched between two exterior skins of plywood, said Marc Slood, Cascadia marketing representative.

"The walls are better insulated than a typical house," Slood said. "They are made much tighter than a framed house, which reduces the amount of heat lost or gained through the walls and roof."

Each Cascadia model maximizes the window area oriented toward the south so that less energy is needed to heat the house during cold months. The houses are built on a slab-on-grade base. When sunlight shines through the windows it heats up the concrete, taking advantage of thermal mass and keeping the house warm throughout the night.

The design also incorporates exterior and interior shades to

prevent overheating in the summer, Slood said.

Cascadia houses will be available in two models designed to respond to a range of site conditions, including solar orientation and access to street and neighborhood. The models include a set of options for alternate floor plans, facades and amenities, allowing many possible variations.

SSIC panels have been available for the last 50 years, but have not been mass produced because they tend to be more expensive than conventional methods of wall and roof construction, Slood said.

"One way that Cascadia has tried to make these panels more affordable is to design the houses with these size panels in mind," Slood said. "The panels are pre-manufactured as specified and assembled on site. This system reduces on-site labor by approximately 40 percent."

Cascadia project coordinators have been attempting to contact all non-profit organizations in Oregon in an attempt to market their design. The St. Vincent DePaul Society Habitat for Humanity program has agreed to implement Cascadia in their affordable housing projects, but no other organizations, including University Family Housing, have followed St. Vincent DePaul's lead.

The lack of immediate interest has not discouraged Cascadia's designers.

"We are sending out press releases and asked builders who are interested to put their names on a list that would be given to developers," Slood said. "Even if someone took the design and ran with it, we wouldn't get the credit, but at least our goal of creating energy-efficient, affordable housing will be reached."

Some other benefits of using the Cascadia design include potential reductions in mortgage

rates, shorter construction time and less construction waste, including 50 percent less framing lumber, Slood said.

One Cascadia home was built in Springfield, but it has attracted so much local attention that the owners have asked the location not to be identified.

"There are just too many people showing up to look at their home," Slood said.

In addition to making documents available to non-profit developers, the Energy Studies in Buildings Laboratory is offering to provide technical assistance to help get these houses built, including training workshops, contacts with panel manufacturers and acting as the central information source on the building system.

Total construction costs for a Cascadia home are projected to be near \$59,000.

Two tobacco companies strike deal

■ **SETTLEMENT:** Cigarette companies agreed to pay \$300 billion rather than face industry regulation

By Rochelle Olson
Associated Press Writer

Abandoning their all-out defense of cigarettes, the nation's two biggest tobacco companies now seem willing to cut their legal losses for up to \$300 billion and retire Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man if the government backs off its threat to regulate nicotine.

RJR Nabisco and Philip Morris executives are in early talks with the attorneys general of eight states in hopes of winning blanket protection from lawsuits over smoking-related health problems, it was disclosed Wednesday.

In return, the cigarette companies would pay hundreds of billions of dollars and agree to cut back on ads, especially ones like Joe Camel that appeal to children and those that depict people, such as the Marlboro Man.

The cigarette companies' willingness to even consider such concessions marks a startling turnaround. For decades, the tobacco industry has fought a no-retreat battle on all fronts.

In the past few years, however, the industry has been barraged with lawsuits filed by 22 states and countless individuals, and the litigation is hurting stock prices and taking management attention away from the business of selling cigarettes.

"I think the tobacco industry is in big trouble and they know it, so they are finally beginning to come to the table," Minnesota Attorney General Hubert H. Humphrey III said. "I think their proposals still fall short of what we'd be interested in."

A sticking point is whether the Food and Drug Administration would get the right to regulate the nicotine levels in cigarettes to make them less addictive.

The tobacco companies adamantly oppose such regulation for fear that once the FDA gets the power to regulate tobacco, it will try to ban it.

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