

DESIGN + DECOR

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Jon Kukk, Joyce Owens, Renee Zepeda, Shelley McCormick and Gaby Saad.

ing upscale designs with a bent toward future sustainability and environmental consciousness. These include low-emissivity (low-E) windows, LED lighting, solar roofing and even solar-powered battery packs to work in tandem with, or instead of, the ever-present Florida generator. Indeed, there was much discussion about the color green and its ecological trending counterparts of sustainability, net zero, carbon neutral and a host of other terms that allow a less-invasive or no-negative environmental footprint—not to mention the movement toward mainstream solar energy and general energy efficiency.

Several architects, including Joyce Owens of Joyce Owens Architects, see buildings inching toward carbon neutral—a net-zero carbon footprint—with big corporations, such as Microsoft, as the current vanguards of the movement. They are “educating the consumer on practices of good design,” such as “energy efficiency” and being “carbon neutral,” said Joyce.

It’s that trend toward energy efficiency that Florida residents are starting to take seriously and research, said Mario Valle of PBS Contractors. “Florida is catching up, what with our wonderful weather,” Mario said. “Folks are starting to stay longer and longer here in town, and they want that energy approach.”

Solar power isn’t new, but it’s a thriving conduit to sustainability, with breakthrough developments that include durable new roofing tile powerful enough to take care of a home’s entire energy needs. According to Mike Roller of Marco Custom Builders, solar [? Or

does he mean that new roofing tile?] can power a house all night long, even with the air conditioning on, which can help halt the spread of mold and bacteria in the aftermath of a hurricane. “Generators are used a lot in Florida, but they only run for so long,” Mike said. “This would do a lot for energy independence, especially after a hurricane. You’re up and running, not worried about mold. This would be a big positive change.”

Camden Ashmore, half of the father-son duo at Ashmore Design, is also a proponent of solar roofing—and of solar-powered battery packs. Despite this up-and-coming technology, Camden acknowledged that the lack of aesthetics is a hindrance on many levels, even though batteries are more efficient than a generator. “Most generators can’t power a full house,” he said, adding that three battery packs could likely get that job done.

Energy efficiency isn’t the only game changer of 2020, however. Tech-savvy and study- or work-from-home friendly builds with touchless water faucets and toilets are moving toward the norm, as consumers prepare to spend more time at home in a more hygienic environment. Indeed, Connor & Gaskins’ Jon Lawrence said the push for home offices has taken an imperative turn. What used to be a casual notion—sure, let’s have a home office—has now taken a more prominent role in client needs, with more thought put into how the office will function, given that it’s no longer a place just for occasional paperwork and errant evening business calls. This new normal has led clients to look at such conveniences as a separate entrance to the office, as opposed to the usual sole internal



Joyce Owens

