

"The Coolest Mobile Home Ever"

The i-house

Grand Opening – May, 2009

<http://claytonihouse.com/>



An Interview with the Architects from Clayton Homes.

How did the i-house project start?

We have a corporate culture that is sensitive to the environment and a strategy of delivering the highest value to homebuyers. An increased emphasis on being “green” and energy efficient in our processes and work environments led us to work with EPA to build energy efficiency as a standard into our homes. In 2003, the EPA designated Clayton as an Energy Star partner as we became the first homebuilder to become certified at every home building facility. Since then we have built thousands of Energy Star ready homes for our homeowners. As we became more aware of “green” building, Kevin Clayton (CEO) directed our team to build homes incorporating more green products. In 2008, Mr. Clayton asked us to design and specify a home radically different from anything available, incorporating as many green and energy efficient products as possible. He stepped back, gave a free hand and the ihouse was created.

What was your thinking in its development?

We started with a review of research, design and development on what others had developed in the way of green homes and their use of green and energy efficient components. This began to shape the design of the building envelope and how we wanted the home to look. We had to consider our home building facilities and how we could maximize the economies of scale allowing the ihouse to be affordable by all. We then considered component materials and continued our research into the manufacturer specification and material test results. We constantly compared our thinking with contemporaries to make sure we weren’t building something we couldn’t build and no one could afford. The home started to take shape.

Who influenced you?

Certainly, through the architectural education process and the act of practice, a designer forms stylistic tendencies that are based on the study of others’ work. To site one or more specific influences that helped shape the ihouse architecture, however, is difficult. Dwell magazine as well as other periodicals has been a source of information and inspiration specific to the ihouse.

Who did you partner with in the development?

Because of the pace of the design phase, design development collaboration was limited to team members including in-house engineering professionals and marketing specialists. However, upon completion of the first prototype we included the ihouse in our annual showcase of homes. It was

then that we had the opportunity to get constructive feedback from consumers, local architects and design professionals, as well as our colleagues at the University of Tennessee School of Architecture. In fact, we hosted a lunch for some of the professors and students, which included the Dean of the School of Architecture, John McRae, as well as professors Ted Shelton, Tricia Stuth and James Rose. After the tour we held a Q&A session and received useful feedback that helped shape continued development of the product.

What were Kevin's directions during the process?

We are delighted to say that the direction we received amounted to encouragement and reaction. He told us to let our imaginations loose and design something that may be built in a precision built process. The stimulating aspect of the development process is that he was adamant that we not be constrained by budget.

What challenges did you have?

Time. It is always a challenge to deliver on a project that involves so many within a timeframe to meet accelerated expectations. A CEO (even ours) tends to have a very short horizon for projects being concluded. While ours was encouraging our work, he was anxious to see the end product. We received wonderful help and cooperation from teammates. We were all anxious to see what a modern home, using green products and highly energy efficient products, built for everyone might look like. In fact, when a challenge arose, we had many knocking down the obstacles. Shipping constraints were also a challenge. We know the rules of shipping size limits and worked hard to maintain the desired form of the ihouse within these limits and maintain the desired outcome.

What was it like when you were told it was going to be a home produced for sale?

Few of us are given the opportunity to create something and then have it produced with little or no changes. Going from a prototype to a production model is like your 5th grader winning the spelling bee against all the high schoolers. It was exhilarating.

Who did you bring in to help refine your thinking?

Our engineering staff, led by Mark Ezzo, helped considerably in bringing the concept to reality. They were continually in the loop, making suggestions and helping with requirements necessary for home construction. As mentioned before, the University of Tennessee School of Architecture remained involved, which kept our ideas fresh and on point. In addition, there was a healthy dose of "real" people that gave reactions continually. It has been a group think project.

Why choose the items/components for inclusion that you did?

We looked for components that met our desire for green and/or energy efficiency. Product developers worldwide are increasingly focusing efforts to produce green and energy efficient products. If you look around, it is easy to see the green product lines in every company. We have seen even more products that are environmentally sensitive evolve since the ihouse introduction. We will incorporate many of these in the production models and allow the product to evolve as more components emerge in the market. We will look for proven technology, adopting tested components.

Where will the ihouse be best suited?

Standard roof snow loads will be for 20 lbs, with the option to increase this to 30 lbs. We recognize that this is a general discussion and snow load requirements may vary considerably, but this is where we are starting. We are already considering different roof plans for different areas of the country and will address those as the home buyers dictate. While the ihouse is built in a production environment, it will be very individualized.

What design modifications will have to be done for a wider audience?

We are not sure there will be a lot of design modifications. The ihouse will be a series of homes designed for a discriminating buyer. We hope the buyer will be conscious of the environment and want to be part of the solution and represent an example of what others can do. The genesis of the ihouse lies in the core elements of Clayton's traditional homes. The ihouse takes it to a different level. However, many of the lessons learned with the ihouse are easily incorporated into the designs of the traditional Clayton line of homes. Any Clayton home buyer will be able to benefit from the lessons learned from the ihouse, and that home owner will be able to own a home with a more efficient energy system and components that are sustainable. It is the commitment our company makes and one our CEO will hold us all to. It is integral to who we are.

Few More Project Highlights:

- A couple hundred will be completed in 2009 with 1800 being built over the next 18 months.
- The i-house features the Fabral 1 ½ “ SSR and Corrugated metal roof panels.
- Metal roofing finished the look and function of the home for the next generation. It was clean, and provided a solution nationwide for a consistent, great looking and functional roofing material.