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Smaller is the new bigger at the Seattle Home Show

P-I STAFF

For decades, the unofficial motto of the Seattle Home Show seemed to be big, bigger, biggest -- it's all good.

Not so this year at the 65th version of the country's oldest and largest commercial home show, which opens a nine-day run Saturday.

This year, with the economy melting down like a soft candle under a desert sun, the emphasis is on the "new" American home -- smaller, less opulent, more efficient, but with no fewer amenities.

There also is a focus on homeowners self-financing improvement projects, in part or in total, rather than taking equity out of their homes as house values decline.

At the smallest end of the "living small" spectrum is a community of mini-cabins and sheds from Aurora Quality Buildings. These structures can be set up as living spaces, for storage or many other uses. Most of them are 200 square feet or less, which means they can be built without building permits in most areas of the state.

Another model home, The Paradise from Palm Harbor Homes, is a 587-square-foot cottage designed to serve as a vacation retreat, guesthouse, artist's studio, hunting/fishing cabin or parents' suite. This manufactured home has the look of a traditionally built home.



zoom Tilt LLC

Moving up in size are a couple of 1,700-square-foot homes -- The Alki and The Lopez, both from Timberland Homes. Each is built around a great room concept.

"Illuminative" tiles feature LED lights in natural stone tiles, and are available from local manufacturer Tilt LLC of Kent.

New products are always a draw at the home show. Here are a few you might want to encounter:

- A line of lamps with built-in speakers that can connect to a home theater, audio system or iPod for an enhanced home entertainment experience.
- An iPod dock designed to blend in with the home decor.
- The world's first illuminated tiles featuring LED technology incorporated into natural stone tiles to provide a safe, efficient source of light.

More than 50 free seminars will be offered during the show. Topics include: refinancing your home in today's market, carbon-smart technologies, financing a remodeling project, maximizing closet space, building green while maintaining quality and value, whether a remodel is your best investment, and 15 questions to ask before hiring a contractor.

Many exhibitors at the show offer free or low-cost consultations, either on the spot or by appointment after the show.

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Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue

Solar Power and Energy...
Saturday, Jan 23, 12:00 pm
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Tree Tour with Arthur Lee Jacobson
Sunday, Apr 25, 2:00 pm
Evergreen-Washelli Cemetery, Seattle

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