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Hopper hopes this is his year to win The News-Press event.

The Cape

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Green home goes platinum

Builder's use of solar power recognized

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Don Koogler has been building homes for 37 years.

During that time, he's put his heart into more than 3,000 original designs.

But his current 6,000-square-foot project in Cape Coral has dug down into his soul. The home earned a Florida Green Building Coalition Platinum certification for its nearly full run on solar power and substantial green features.

IF YOU GO

What: Open house for a green Koogler Home
When: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday
Where: 5956 S.W. First Ave.
Cost: Free and open to the public

It's the only home to earn the certification in Cape Coral and one of seven in Florida.

"I didn't get into (the green features) much when we first started building, but now, I feel it should be mandatory," Koogler said. "... It just helps the footprint in the

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This Cape Coral home, built and designed by Koogler Homes, earned the Florida Green Building Coalition Platinum certification.
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world to use the natural sun ... (This home) makes me feel good as a builder because I feel like I'm giving back to the world."

The home, which took eight months and hundreds of crewmen to build, will be open for viewing from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

Koogler has built homes with green features in the past, but not to this capacity, he said.

"Everybody thinks going green costs more, but it really doesn't," Koogler said. "... And there isn't a better time to build than now when material and labor costs are at an all-time low."

Green features can be found both inside and outside the home. There are 41 photovoltaic solar panels on the roof, which have been angled so that they get optimal use and so they cannot be seen.

The home also features solar hot water heaters, energy star appliances, and high-tint, insulated impact-resistant windows and doors.

LED lighting uses a total of 140 watts of energy throughout the whole home. A single incandescent light bulb can use that much or even more energy.

Owners Bob and Joann Elardo wanted to renovate their previously existing home on the property, but after the many limiting federal and state rules they found, they decided to tear it down and start over.

"We reused as much as we could from the old home," Joann Elardo said. "That was something that was really important to us ... I think that any educated person can see that our resources are becoming limited. We need to recycle and reuse as many materials as we can."

Most of the old wood, concrete, metal and copper pipes have been implemented into their new home.

Flooring throughout the home, and even some of the walls, is either made of a natural shell stone or recycled wood. Many of the countertops are concrete based with natural shells mixed in.

All of the paint, stains and adhesives that have been used are organic. And all of the windows have

automatic shades that come down when sunlight begins to filter into the home.

The overhang around the perimeter of the home is 3 feet instead of the standard 2, which Koogler had to get special permission for from the city. Pergolas extend from the overhang to add additional sun shading.

"We tried to do a luxury home made green," Joann Elardo said. "... It's more than I was hoping for. We've always considered ourselves fortunate, but this is well beyond our dreams."