

# Lansing State Journal

## LOCAL

# A look inside the Ingham County Land Bank's first fully solar-powered home, now for sale



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LANSING — The Ingham County Land Bank is offering someone a chance to be on the leading edge of sustainability — and to build some financial equity — through the purchase of a new, solar-powered home on Avalon Street.

The solar home, on the market for about two months, is intended for a buyer whose income is at or below 80% of the area's median income, and would be a good starter home, Roxanne Case, the Land Bank's executive director, said.

"We're building larger homes, 1,300 or 1,400 square feet, with four bedrooms in anticipation of folks that would start here, and then move to another home that's bigger for them," Case said. "They build wealth, they build equity in this little house and then move on. That's really the goal is to help people move forward."

As part of the agreement to purchase the home, a buyer must consent to sharing information regarding their electrical consumption at the home and the performance of its solar panels for up to six years.

"We want to track this," Case said. "This is a brand new thing in the city of Lansing."

The newly constructed, one-story, two-bedroom home the Land Bank built on the lot is an exercise in efficiency and sustainability. Solar panels cover one side of its roof, powering the home's electrical system. There's no gas line to the structure and the home features a tankless water heater and energy-efficient appliances.

On the market now for \$145,000, it's the first green energy, solar home the Land Bank has constructed, but it won't be their last, Case said: The Land Bank has plans to build another

solar-powered home in the near future.

## **Building up the city, removing blight**

A 1 1/2-story house previously stood where the new home is. The original dwelling was foreclosed on in 2016 and the Land Bank later assumed ownership.

At just over 1,000 square feet, the original home wasn't much smaller than what has taken its place. That was intentional, Case said.

"A big two-story home would not fit here," she said on Wednesday from the backyard at 3316 Avalon St. "What we look at is trying to figure out how to match the neighborhood. The house we built fits here."

The size is where the major similarities between the previous structure and the home that replaced it end.

The 1,040-square-foot Avalon Street house sits on just over a quarter of an acre. It's painted a light green with white trim. Inside, the open floor plan is complemented by large windows in the living room, kitchen and bedrooms that allow light in to flood its spaces.

The home has one bathroom, but no basement. There's a shed in the backyard for storage.

The home has three heating and cooling pump units: one in the main living and kitchen space, and one in each of its bedrooms.

"They all have their own remote control units with them," said Tony Olivarez, a construction manager for the project. "That's how you can go ahead and go into your heat mode and your cooling mode."

The controllers also feature timer options for heating and cooling, he said. Ceiling fans in each room help circulate the air.

The home's bathroom features a wall heater and a vent to the home's exterior, Olivarez said, and a compressor unit in the back of the home functions much like a furnace and air conditioning unit would.

The excess energy the home's solar panels collect receives credits through Lansing's Board of Water & Light, Case said. The solar panels are durable and will collect energy during all four of Michigan's seasons, she said.

"We haven't even paid a heating bill," Case said. "Now, it just recently started getting cold and no one's living here, but the home is completely energy efficient."

## **The first, but not the last solar Land Bank home**

The Land Bank, which is part of Ingham County, builds homes on property obtained after property tax foreclosures that go unclaimed in tax auctions.

The money to build the Avalon Street house, which cost just over \$177,000, came from COVID-19 relief funding the county received from the federal government, Ingham County Treasurer Alan Fox said. The funding covers the difference between what the house is sold for and what it cost to construct, he said.

"The intent of that kind of financing is to be able to move people who have moderate incomes into single-family houses even given that the costs of building single-family houses have skyrocketed just in the past couple of years," Fox said.

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