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Greentech building Japan

Sekisui House: Building by example with zero-energy housing



Leading the greentech building revolution is Japanese firm Sekisui House, the world's number one constructor of zero-energy houses, whose CEO was the only private sector representative to take part in a roundtable discussion on Low-carbon and Affordable Buildings at the COP22 U.N. Climate Change Summit in November

Innovative Japanese-made products have made Japan a global leader in environmental technologies, from top selling green vehicles like the Toyota Prius and Nissan Leaf, to energy-saving paint developed by companies like NCK.

Now you may be familiar with zero emission vehicles like the Nissan Leaf, but what about zero-energy houses? As the name implies, a zero-energy house (ZEH) uses energy-saving technology and solar power to reduce net energy consumption to zero.

The Japanese government has set a target that half of newly built houses will meet zero-energy standards by 2020. Supporting the government to reach that ambitious target is Sekisui House, which introduced ZEHs to the market in 2013.

Sekisui House is the world's number one homebuilder, having constructed more than 2.2 million homes since it was established in 1960 across five countries – Japan, the U.S., China, Singapore and Australia. It has also constructed more

ZEHs than any other company in the world – almost 25,000 to date and in 2015 an incredible 71 percent of its new builds were ZEHs.

A construction company on the frontline of the fight against climate change with a vision toward “zero carbon emissions”, Sekisui developed the homebuilding industry’s first Environmental Future Plan back in 1999, concerning itself with low-energy building long before such ideas were commonplace in global dialogue.

At the COP22 U.N. Climate Change Conference, held in Marrakech in November, Sekisui CEO Mr. Kenichi Ishida was selected as the only private sector representative to take part in a roundtable discussion on Low-carbon and Affordable Buildings. Other roundtable participants from the public sector were eager to learn about the company’s success in pioneering green building projects.

Since 1999, the company has gone on to produce environmentally friendly properties in the five countries that it operates in, helping to strengthen its reputation as a global green energy builder.

One of its most iconic projects is the Central Park development in Sydney, which it is building in partnership with Frasers Property Australia. Incorporating apartments, shopping areas, a main park, and an \$8 million public art collection, Central Park also boasts 58 hectares of futuristic sustainable architecture, heritage enclaves and lush gardens. The project aims to become the city’s most sustainable urban community, with each building to achieve a minimum five-green-star rating from the Green Building Council of Australia.

Sekisui House is not only building by example, it is also leading by example, by ensuring its factories, which produce parts to build 50,000 new homes a year, comply with the highest environmental, waste management and energy efficiency standards.

“Construction of a house usually requires an average of about 60,000 building components. In order to provide stable performance and quality for every house it builds, Sekisui House introduced prefabrication production, where the building components are produced in our factories and then constructed on site efficiently,” says Mr. Ishida. “We are also fiercely proud that we are able to achieve 100% recycling of waste at all of our factories.”

Even to the environmentally concerned house buyer, a house’s design will be just as important as its green credentials – and this is something Mr. Ishida and Sekisui are acutely aware of. That’s why the company strives to ensure that its zero-energy homes are as pleasing to the eye as they are to the planet.

“For solar roofs, it is important to have a beautiful design without restricting the shape of the roof,” adds Mr. Ishida. “In a similar way, Sekisui House has been supplying the roof-tile solar cell since 2003.”

“In terms of saving energy, conventional wisdom holds that small windows are better. However, Sekisui House aims for residents to enjoy the view of their garden and so the rooms have large, highly insulated windows. You might think that design and energy savings have no relation to each other. However, energy saving is not the only important element for a residence, they want their house to be beautiful and comfortable.”

So, owners of a Sekisui ZEH can sit back comfortably in their beautiful new homes, knowing that they are doing their bit to save the planet.

By Jonathan Meaney, Chief Editor at The Worldfolio
