

Thermos-Like Homes Aggressively Save Energy

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Three miles northeast of the White House, now topped with solar panels, six modest new row houses are expected to deliver world-class savings in energy.

The reason's simple: They're so well sealed and insulated that they perform just like a coffee thermos. No furnaces are needed, because they're projected to use up to 90 percent less energy than a typical house.

Built partly by volunteers, these low-budget [Habitat for Humanity](#) homes—now nearing completion—don't look like anything special. They have basic brick facades like others in their gentrifying Ivy City neighborhood.

They stand out in other ways: 12-inch-thick exterior walls and triple-pane, imported-from-Ireland windows offer more than double the insulation required of new homes. In lieu of a furnace, tiny, wall-mounted Mitsubishi units provide heating and cooling. (See related blog post: "[Laying the Foundation for Sustainable Housing in D.C.](#)")

The passive standard is buoyed by efforts to fight climate change, because [buildings account for 40 percent of total U.S. energy use](#) and 10 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions.
