A bathroom of a prototype of a futuristic and efficient housing unit is on display at UL's Abbeville Hall. They are being built by Louisiana System Homes in St. Martinville.

+ Drawn to iSpace

St. Martinville company touts green housing option

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An energy-efficient, futuristic housing unit called iSpace could debut in Louisiana soon.

Three rectangular and affordable units were on display at Abbeville Hall this week, partially so UL officials and students could take a look at it.

"We did go and take a look at it and it looks like a wonderful option, something that definitely piqued our interest," UL Housing Director Lisa Landry said.

UL's student housing currently has 4,700 beds, but they would like to increase that to 5,000 beds. A request for proposals is out to companies now and ends in January.

"We'll have to wait and see what different companies offer us," Landry said.

Students walk to visit the prototype of the Space on UL's campus on Thursday.

Several UL officials and students toured the unit.

"Obviously the green initiative that the university has really made a push towards is important," she said. "The students who went and looked at it returned with positive feedback."

The unit on display was 399 square feet, but a floor-to-ceiling window and design made the interior rooms most of the unit.

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iSpace

Uses recycled material and the unit itself is reusable, can be stacked and withstands winds up to 175 mph.

Louisiana System Built Homes, a million-square-foot facility in St. Martinville will manufacture iSpace units exclusively for Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. The units that will be built there will be about a third larger than the one on display—320 square feet. The new venture will create more than 100 jobs in the first quarter of 2006, which Nugent says will double the amount of jobs in St. Martinville.

Along with documents, development consultant John T. Landry said the units could be used for affordable housing, homeless and emergency housing. Landry said iSpace is in talks with New Orleans officials to place the units in low-income areas.

A single-family home could include three units. If the family grows, a unit could be added. If it shrinks, a unit could be sold off.

For people living in prefabricated houses and trailers an iSpace would be "like moving to the Taj Mahal."

The units would cost a third less than traditional housing, and an electricity bill could be as low as a month in the hottest conditions, Landry said.

iSpace is also in talks with FEMA, Nugent said.

The units can be built quickly, up to 20 stacked on the back of a trailer and installed the same day, he said.