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“Smart Roof” for Street of Dreams “Smart House”

Kent Wong is a smart man who set out to build what he called a “smart house.” It was not surprising, then, that he chose to install a Smart Roof.

As he shopped around, Wong considered the Metro Shake-II, a stone-coated steel roofing material by Metro Roof Products (Oceanside, Calif.). The company bills its products as “Smart Roofs for Smart People,” which seemed to fit Wong and his project perfectly.

“The system is well thought-out. It makes sense,” says Wong, an anesthesiologist and part-time land developer. “When you see it you say, ‘Oh yeah, that makes sense.’ I thought, ‘A-ha! Well, we’re going to build a “smart” component home.’”

This month, Wong and his home development company, NW Smart Homes, will unveil the completed house as part of the five-home Street of Dreams project in Bonny Lake, WA. His is the only structure using a steel-frame design that incorporates the stone-coated steel roof.

Most stone-coated steel roof panels install over a “batten” system, perfect when re-roofing wood-shake homes that have no solid sheathing. However, solid sheathing decks are standard in the Pacific Northwest, so the batten-less design of the Metro Shake-II panel is well suited to the region. The panels have an extra long back flange and angled nose sections that allow easy side-to-side interlock and securing to a solid sheathed roof deck.

“What I think we need to have are people who try good products, to show the people what can be done instead of the traditional way of ‘building a house,’” Wong says.

Clearly, Wong is looking long-term. He has another development in the works that is planned to include 43 homes, and hopes to use the Street of Dreams house as a model.

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He sees the Metro Shake-II roof as a durable, low-maintenance, trouble-free alternative to the cheaper materials often used in large developments.

“Compared to the long-term benefits, it’s worth it,” Wong says.

What he learned in researching materials was that his intention to use all “smart” components dovetailed nicely with Metro’s “Smart Roof” program:

- The materials rate high in tests against wind, hail, and rain and earthquake damage.
- All of the designs are extremely lightweight.
- They insulate better against heat than standard materials.
- They have built-in versatility with a variety of colors in three profiles—shake, tile and shingle—to match most homeowners’ style considerations.
- The durability is unmatched: All Metro products are backed by a 50-year warranty.

“It’s kind of coincidental we’re on the same program—what we’re trying to feature is exactly what he was looking for in a product,” says Rob Peters, the Metro Roof Products sales representative who met with Wong.

When he first met with the Street of Dreams architect, Wong had little idea what a steel roof could be. He joked that the only metal roof he knew of was the one on his local McDonald’s restaurant, and it was a standing-seam design. Architect Randy Hedgepeth suggested Wong meet with representatives of Custom-Bilt Metals, a metal-roof distributor. From there, they joined with roofing contractor Columbia Sheet Metal and manufacturer Metro Roof Products.

“And we all sat down and looked at what they had and the Metro Shake-II was just a natural for what they were trying to do and the look they were trying to go after,” Peters says.

It was more than the look that sold Wong. He noted sincerity in Peters’ manner that gave Wong confidence in Metro. “He seems like a businessman, not like a pure salesman,” Wong says.

In addition, Metro staff members kept in close touch with Wong throughout the project, from the first presentation to the finish of installation. He received regular calls and

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personal visits, even though the company is headquartered in southern California and the job is in northern Washington State.

“That makes you feel you’ll get a lot of support,” Wong says. “That also helped us to feel good about choosing Metro. It was appealing, the human element.”

However, the contractor had not worked previously with a Metro Shake-II. David Froembling, vice president of Columbia Sheet Metal, said he expected installation to be more demanding than it was. With 75 percent of the roofing job completed, Froembling said he had become a big fan of the product—and its ease of installation.

“It took only a couple of days of teaching a couple guys who have never done that system before, and they are off and running,” Froembling said.

He also liked the Shake-II for these aspects:

- **Convenience:** “You can start and stop just about anywhere, leave stuff out and go back and infill and it doesn’t show a pattern or doesn’t get out of square. It’s really nice to be able to do that. That’s pretty rare for these types of panels. It’s a great feature.”
- **Details:** “I thought doing all the detail work was going to be a lot more involved. The flashings, (areas) around pipe penetrations, your cuts in your valleys and stuff, I thought that was going to be a lot more involved, but it’s really all very simple.”
- **Sheathing or no sheathing:** The original design for Wong’s house called for no sheathing, just steel Z-shaped purlins in the same layout as the courses for the Shake-II panels. “It would have worked fine, and that’s one reason the Metro was chosen for that,” Froembling says. Later, the designers opted for solid sheathing. Installers simply screwed the Shake-II to the deck. “The product has still worked out exactly the way it was intended.”
- **Lack of patterns:** “A lot of these interlocking panel roof systems, if you look at them long enough, will start to develop a zigzag pattern. You see all the seams just line up—the next course over, next course up—going up the roof. Their (Shake-II) system, you don’t get that type of pattern effect. It just all blends together real well. It doesn’t look like something that’s ‘panelized,’ is the best way I can put it.”

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Before deciding on the Metro Shake-II, Wong checked with several engineers about supporting the weight of various roofing products. Each one told him the costs would rise significantly to support clay or concrete tiles and other heavier products. He also learned that many standard tiles could crack or break prematurely, requiring repairs. The Shake-II might bend slightly if impacted with heavy force, but it will not crack.

With all of that going for the Shake-II, the aesthetic appeal sealed the deal. No stone-coated steel product gives a wood-shake appearance like the Metro product.

“Very, very nice,” Wong says. “If you look at composite, it looks very flat. It does not show the higher-end home that kind of character.”

Says Froembling: “I like metal roofs, but standing-seam metal roofs don’t look good on all houses. It takes the right house to make it look good. Now we are able to offer a metal roof product that looks like every other house in the neighborhood, except you realize, ‘Wow, that’s going to be there forever with no maintenance.’”

The Wong “Smart House” in the Street of Dreams project is at 10403-176th Ave. E., Bonny Lake, Wash. The Street of Dreams project is a set of five homes custom-designed by five builders. It is produced by the Master Builders Association of Pierce County.

Smart Roofs for Smart People™

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