

Solar streetlights designed in Florida may illuminate roads across southern US

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Sidewalks lining new neighborhoods across the southern U.S. could soon be lit by solar-powered streetlights made by a startup company in Tampa.

Streetleaf, headquartered in Tampa with about 15 employees, announced that it's inked a deal with the nation's largest homebuilder, D.R. Horton. Streetleaf will provide its streetlights for some of D.R. Horton's new developments in fast-growing, sunny locales like Texas, Arizona, southern California and the broader Southeast.

Liam Ryan, Streetleaf's CEO, said the agreement is a breakthrough to bring the solar-powered technology toward wider adoption.

"It's almost like crossing the chasm," Ryan said in an interview. "We're going from just early adopters to now, mainstream customers are taking what Streetleaf is doing seriously."

The company's streetlights each have a solar panel and battery that can charge up in a few hours and keep shining for three to five days of complete cloud cover, Ryan said. They can take as little as 15 minutes to install because there's no need to connect them to the [electric grid](#), a major selling point for developers who may need to adjust the locations of streetlights as they build.

They also save residents money, Ryan said, since homeowners in D.R. Horton subdivisions are typically responsible for the costs of maintaining streetlights in their neighborhoods.

The company installed its first light in 2019 in the Epperson development in Wesley Chapel. To date, it's installed about 7,500 lights, at least half of which are in Tampa Bay neighborhoods, particularly in Pasco County and eastern Hillsborough.

The company estimates its streetlights have prevented around 2.6 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions so far. The technology also has dimming options, including motion sensing, that can reduce [light pollution](#).

"We just saw this niche opportunity of bringing [modern technology](#) to this often neglected, key infrastructure," Ryan said.

Streetleaf's solar streetlights in North Fort Myers withstood Hurricane Ian two years ago and kept a neighborhood there lit for four to five days after while the power was still out, Ryan said.

This resilience helped convince D.R. Horton to cement its relationship with the startup.

"Sustainable infrastructure is highly attractive to homeowners, and the added peace of mind that comes with knowing the lights are designed to remain operational even during many [extreme weather events](#) like hurricanes is equally important," Brad Conlon, senior vice president of business development for D.R. Horton, said in a statement.

Streetleaf expects its agreement with the homebuilder to lead to at least 10,000 new streetlight installations annually, more than doubling its number of installed lights in the first year. The startup declined to provide a dollar figure for how much the deal is worth.

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