

Nicor Gas Smart Neighborhoods™ FAQs

Q: What are Nicor Gas Smart Neighborhoods?

A: Nicor Gas and Habitat for Humanity are teaming up to offer two planned communities in the Chicagoland area that emphasize resiliency and energy efficiency. These modern homes will provide homeowners with a sense of security through manageable bills, reliability and a platform for future energy savings through smart and connected technology.

Nicor Gas Smart Neighborhood homes are designed to achieve net zero energy and emissions by leveraging smart technologies, energy efficient building envelopes and safe and reliable dual fuel energy sources. With these advanced features, the homeowners will see reduced emissions and increased energy efficiency, creating more cost-effective and comfortable lifestyles.

Q: What is a Smart Neighborhood?

A: Smart Neighborhood™ is a trademark brand of Southern Company, the parent company of Nicor Gas. Smart Neighborhoods advance energy technologies that work together as part of an affordable, reliable and clean energy economy. In addition to Illinois, Southern Company has developed Smart Neighborhoods in Georgia and Alabama, and Mississippi's is coming soon.

Q: Why is Nicor Gas building Smart Neighborhoods?

A: In partnership with Habitat for Humanity, Nicor Gas is developing Southern Company's first Smart Neighborhood with natural gas heating and water heating solutions because we believe that every family deserves reliable energy service at a price they can afford. This collaboration between Nicor Gas and Habitat for Humanity is unique and sets a precedent in the industry for modeling innovative technologies and affordable energy solutions.

Q: What's unique about a Nicor Gas Smart Neighborhood home?

A: These unique communities are designed with resiliency in mind. They come equipped with smart combinations of natural gas, electricity and renewable energy technologies, demonstrating how the three can work together to provide homeowners with affordable, reliable and efficient homes. Homes in both neighborhoods also feature backup power to provide relief and added safety during inclement weather conditions. In Aurora, a battery system captures and stores energy from the solar panels. In Carpentersville, homes will come equipped with a natural gas generator. If the home loses power, these systems will turn on automatically.

Q: Who is leading the Smart Neighborhood Initiative?

A: Nicor Gas has teamed up with Habitat for Humanity of Northern Fox Valley to develop these homes.

Q: What is Habitat for Humanity and what role will it play in the project?

A: Habitat for Humanity has a simple and profound vision: A world where everyone has a decent place to live. The global organization works together with families, local communities, volunteers and partners

from around the world so that more people can live in affordable and safe homes. The organization's advocacy efforts focus on policy reform to remove systemic barriers preventing low-income and historically underserved families from accessing adequate, affordable shelter.

Both Nicor Gas and Habitat for Humanity believe that owning a home is a pathway to strength, stability and independence. The organizations are teaming up to build two affordable, smart communities in Aurora and Carpentersville, Illinois that exemplify these values.

Habitat for Humanity of Northern Fox Valley, the local Habitat affiliate, is building and selling the homes, and Nicor Gas is bringing in smart technology—like solar panels and smart home systems—and equipping the homes with integrated dual fuel systems. In addition, Nicor Gas is conducting valuable research and development to learn more about how these energy efficient upgrades perform in real-world homes.

Q: Where are the Nicor Gas Smart Neighborhoods located?

A: Nicor Gas and Habitat for Humanity of Northern Fox Valley are building two Smart Neighborhoods. One will be located in Aurora, Illinois. The second will be in Carpentersville, Illinois.

Q: What is the timeline for construction of the Smart Neighborhoods?

A: Construction on the new Smart Neighborhoods began in summer 2025.

Q: Are there differences between the homes in the two Smart Neighborhoods?

A: While the homes in both neighborhoods share many of the same features—solar panels, LED lighting and a smart electrical panel, to name a few—the neighborhoods also have their own unique features.

In Aurora, homes will use insulating concrete form walls, known as ICFs. These rigid, insulating foam blocks are stacked and then filled with reinforced concrete, offering increased energy efficiency. This will be complemented by spray foam insulation for added thermal layer. The homes in Carpentersville, in contrast, will be built using traditional wood-frame construction. In addition, both homes will come equipped with a backup power supply: In Aurora, homes will have a battery and inverter system. In Carpentersville, it will be a natural gas generator.

These differences will allow Nicor Gas to see how different building methods and technologies impact energy use and home performance throughout the year.

Q: How do Smart Neighborhoods allow for energy efficiency and lower energy bills?

A: The homes will offer homeowners state-of-the-art construction, smart appliances and technologies, and a combination of natural gas, electric and renewable energy systems. Together, these elements maximize energy efficiency while giving homeowners greater control over their energy use.

Q: Are Habitat for Humanity homes free?

A: No. Interested home buyers must apply to Habitat for Humanity's program. Visit habitatnfv.org for more information.

Q: Do Habitat home buyers pay a mortgage?

A: Yes, all Habitat home buyers pay property taxes and an affordable mortgage. Learn more about Habitat for Humanity and their homebuying process at habitatnfv.org.

To learn more about the Smart Neighborhoods, visit ngsmartneighborhoods.com.
If you're interested in becoming a corporate sponsor, contact info@ngsmartneighborhoods.com.