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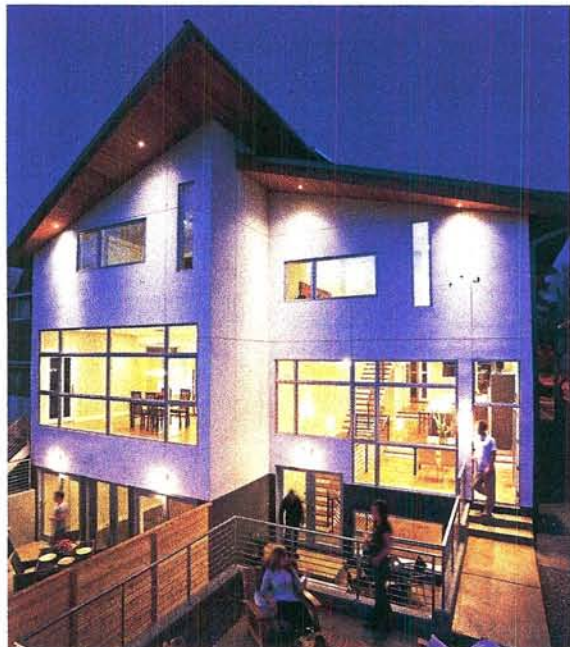
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# Go green or go home!

By Jamie McAfee



Insulation techniques were used to combine improved R-values with recycled content materials. Frank Ooms Photography



Photovoltaic electrical panels produce 40 percent of the electrical needs for this stunning home. Frank Ooms Photography



The kitchen cabinets are made with environmentally friendly materials, and paints are low VOC products. Frank Ooms Photography

*Well, now you can do both.* In the home building industry going green is the norm. The industry is progressively moving forward with a more energy efficient philosophy. A bright spot in this still stagnant housing market is the push for updated building codes making new home construction—a paragon of green design—the standard.

Denver builders are constructing homes with sustainable materials that help increase the value, health and safety of your new home. “Any new home must be built to the new standards, which makes it a greener home than it would have been,” states Chris Regis, owner of Domani Homes, an award-winning, green builder in the Denver metropolitan area. “It’s the way of today and the future of the building industry. Manufacturers are changing how the materials are constructed and their applications. It begins with the raw materials all the way to the finishing touches on the home.”

## *Custom Home Builders*

When building a custom home, you have the freedom to situate the house on a plot of land that will maximize the impact of solar and wind energy.

You can make the most of Mother Nature’s free heating and cooling system by remembering that the greatest heat will come from the south and west exposures. By using smaller double-paned windows, you are able to capture the sunrays without the heat. Look for a window that has a low E rating, which stands for emissivity. Also, designing your home up and not out will provide the same living space and half the carbon footprint.

When choosing green materials for your newly constructed house, you reduce maintenance or replacement costs, conserve energy, improve occupant health and allow greater design flexibility.

For every traditional, unhealthy finish in a building, there exists a green substitute. Engineered wood is quite the buzzword among builders. It is a renewable, durable, wood substitute made of compressed wood products bound together with a strong adhesive. “There is a great deal of research being conducted on future building codes that will reduce the amount of framing members in an exterior wall, for example. Working together, the building industry is coming up with different, more efficient ways to construct a home. The bottom line is that the customer benefits from these discussions that will eventually lead to more environmentally conscious building codes, enforced by the local municipalities,” states Regis.



Birch plywood, formaldehyde-free panels adorn the walls in this brightly illuminated kitchen remodel.  
Kelly Photography Kathleen Lavine

Customers may opt for a home energy rating. This involves an analysis of a home's construction plans and onsite inspections. The home energy rater uses an energy efficiency software package to perform an energy analysis of the home's design. The rater will work with the builder to identify the improvements needed to ensure the house will meet Energy Star performance guidelines. Energy Star is a rating guideline to improve the efficiency of a home over and above the standard home, which is built per code, without the energy star label," explains Regis.

## GREEN CONNECTIONS

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### *Remodelers*

Remodeling is a great way to go green, and an updated green house may catch a higher resale value. Homeowners can get a home energy audit to see where the inefficiencies are, and how they can repair the problem. "Remodelers can get a blower door test to see how well the home is sealed up," suggests Sean Smith, owner of Sean Smith & Company.

Excel Energy offers rebates on home energy audits. After completing the audit, Excel offers another rebate to make the recommended remodeling changes. Smith states, "We provide our customers with an analysis that puts all the green systems into an energy model. It will tell us how much money they will save in monthly energy utilities over not making those improvements.

There is a push for an updated MLS system to indicate the energy efficiency of the house. "There is no easy way to find an Energy Star home in MLS right now," states Smith, who is a residential green building advocate for the U.S. Green Building Council.

By going green in your home, you not only do yourself a financial favor, but Mother Earth thanks you as well.