

# A 100-year opportunity

## Build right the first time, avoid do-overs

**Miles Dyson**  
*Living Green*



"There is never enough time to do a job right the first time, but there is always time enough to do it over..."

I am not sure who gave us this wisdom, but it sure rings true in our daily lives. The amount of time and resources spent to correct problems that would have been easily averted with preparation, planning and research is considerable for any complex project. Construction of new a home is no different.

I attended a PNM/NM Gas utility sponsored meeting in Albuquerque last month where Sam Rashkin was the keynote speaker.

He is one of the leading experts on residential building science in the United States and was responsible for the 1996 implementation of EPA Energy Star for Homes. Rashkin has continued to administer the EPA Energy Star for Homes program since the beginning. One out of every five homes built in the United States last year was Energy Star certified.

Rashkin contends that we have a "100-year opportunity" when building a new home. Builders can incorporate proven strategies at the time of construction that make a home comfortable, healthy to live in, energy efficient and durable or ... builders can skip some key details and homeowners pay the price in increased health problems, maintenance costs and utility dollars during the life of the home. When you need to sell in the

future, expensive retrofits to make the home market competitive are likely.

The "costs" of not doing the job right are also shouldered by the builder in the form of increased call backs, lower sales volumes and diminished reputation in the market. More and more local successful homebuilders continue to educate themselves about efficient, sustainable construction and to incorporate the use of industry sponsored programs that help homes take advantage of the "100-year opportunity."

Programs such as Build Green New Mexico in our state and national programs such as LEED for Homes, Building America and Energy Star for Homes are robust resources for comprehensive proven processes and evolving best practices in residential construction.

Participating builders concentrate on quality construction and reap the benefit of independent, on-location third-party quality assurance inspection and field testing to help get the home built right – the first time.

Energy Star and related green-building programs are synonymous with efficiency, but some of the most important benefits of the best-recognized green and efficient building strategies are not reduced energy use. Key details are, for the most part, not particularly high-tech or expensive.

Consider these simple

durability measures:

- Carefully enclosing insulation in contact with wall, floor and ceiling assemblies limits moisture movement, prevents unwanted condensation, stops pests and helps ensure good indoor air quality.
- Sizing air conditioning equipment

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This Silver City Energy Star home is being built by Timberland Construction and uses an inexpensive prefabricated wall system engineered with wood framing at 4-foot centers. The wall sections include rigid high-density insulation to provide R-21 insulating value within an airtight 2-by-4 frame wall cavity.

correctly increases the life span of mechanical equipment and reduces summer humidity inside the home.

- Good flashing design at roof, window and door installations limits the risk of mold and dry rot in walls and reduces the number of times you will need to seal, paint and caulk the exterior.
- Tight ductwork can extend heating and air conditioning equipment life and will reduce the amount of times you have to dust the home every month.
- A low speed (quiet) laundry room exhaust fan installed to run continuously at slow speed will expel household air contaminants and may reduce the number of colds in your family.
- Water-resistant backing installed at tubs and showers make tile installations last and mitigates possible water damage to wall structures.

- Maintaining a positive slope away from the foundation walls minimizes the chance of flood damage during storms, limits settling of the foundation and cracking of the walls and reduces the chance of mold.

If you are planning to buy or build a new home, consider how that home may look in 2110 and how much fuel, time and dollars it will take to get it that far. Also, weigh the cost to build or purchase against what it will cost to own the home for the 10 to 20 years you will live there.

Taking the time to do the purchasing decision job right on your next new home may keep you from having to do it over.

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