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**HOME**

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## **‘Green’ homes showcase wave of future**

*by Kate Bacon*

*news@thecharlotteweekly.com*

From the street, 9259 Egret Ridge Road in Belmont looks like any new, gated-community home: Potted flowers flank the door, a front porch stretches comfortably along the Craftsman-style residence and a poodle barks his welcome from the sloping, plush green lawn. But this 3,650-square-foot house isn't the norm. It's a green house, built to the specifications of the N.C. HealthyBuilt Homes Program.



This Craftsman-style green home in Belmont showcases technology for the future.

“It’s all about the details,” builder and home owner Bill Harrington explained. Standing in the soaring foyer of his just-completed creation, Harrington appeared genuinely happy to point out the environmentally friendly aspects incorporated in the construction.

To qualify as an N.C. HealthyBuilt Home, a structure must reduce energy and water usage, contain or use materials and systems that protect the environment and be affordable for the owner. With each step of the building process, the scrutiny of a third-party inspector ensured the Harringtons’ house would qualify for the environmental rating. It did, and the Harringtons are so pleased with the result that they plan to enter a national green building competition.

The builder and his wife, Sally, were lured to North Carolina from the Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla., area, where they built high-end custom homes. The state's HealthyBuilt Homes Program drew them north. "My son, who just graduated (from) architecture school in Texas, began talking to me about green building and it sparked my interest," Harrington explained. "Florida doesn't have a green building enterprise, so we came here and decided to build a house to show people you can have a high-performance green home without giving up anything."



All of the home's light fixtures use compact fluorescents, even in the bathroom, which also sports whisper-quiet fans with timers.

All the luxury features are present, but it's evident something is different about the house from the moment you step across the threshold; there isn't the acrid "new paint" smell. "All the paints, varnishes and sealers are low VOC, which means they're made so they release little if any volatile organic components," Sally said. "The house creates and maintains a healthy environment, which means (fewer) drafts (and) less moisture so mildew won't be a problem."

"We chose casement windows because they help get the breezes into the house. And (we selected) windows with Low-E4 ratings," Harrington pointed out while opening a dining room window with the easy turn of a crank.

"The house is passive solar; we use the sun to help heat in the winter and cool in the summer," Harrington said. "Utility bills here are half or less of what a 'regular' house's bills would cost you."

The house's light fixtures use compact fluorescents, even around the bathroom mirrors. "The bulbs have a yellow tint so it looks more like the incandescent bulbs we're used to," Sally explained. "The bath and kitchen fans are quiet because we chose low zone fans with special control panels. You can hit the 10-minute button or the 20-minute button, and it will turn off by itself."



The gourmet kitchen boasts Energy Star appliances to keep operating costs down and limestone, slate and granite to remind one of the earth.

Special details also can be beautiful ones. The wide-planked hardwood floor comes from a Virginia sustainable-forest initiative; the wood is harvested using exacting environmental standards. Even the plush wall-to-wall carpet in the first-floor master suite, the upstairs bedrooms and the bonus room is made from recycled materials. "So is the padding," Sally pointed out.

In the spacious kitchen, Energy Star appliances ensure operating costs and needs stay low while providing gourmet options. "Sally and the decorator chose limestone, slate and granite to make the décor remind you of the earth," Harrington explained.

The bathrooms are equipped with toilets offering two flushing options, thus saving water with every use. And hot water is available almost instantly through heavily insulated water pipes. All air, heat and water pipes are enclosed in insulated spaces.

“Most of what makes this house so different is behind the walls,” Harrington pointed out. “We have a sealed crawl space and an energy-recycling ventilator to make sure that the house breathes and has better indoor air quality.”

Harrington has some advice to help “normal” houses use less energy. “(Where) the house is placed on the lot is important. Street builders can make a difference for all houses just in the way they lay out streets,” he maintained. “Going green can be very easy.”

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