

# The Green Home Consumer

Driving Demand for Green Homes

connecting people\_projects\_products



Produced in  
conjunction with the  
U.S. Green Building Council



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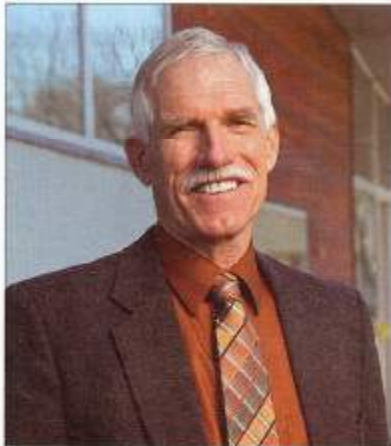


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Front cover: Esopus Net-Zero Energy Home,  
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# Green Expert Perspective: Building Green Today

**Don Ferrier**  
Ferrier Custom Homes



**Don Ferrier**  
President  
Ferrier Custom Homes

*Don Ferrier is a third-generation builder, who has focused on energy-efficient construction with structural insulated panels since 1984. In 2006, MHC profiled Ferrier's landmark project, Heather's Home, in the Residential Green Building SmartMarket Report. This fall, Scott Lewis, director of editorial research at McGraw-Hill Construction checked in with Don to get his insights on best practices in green residential construction and to see how his green custom home business has evolved.*

**What have you been up to since we interviewed you in 2006?**

We finished Heather's home two years ago. It was a prototype with LEED-H guidelines and NAHB green building guidelines as they were being developed and as a part of the DOE Building America program. [We also completed] the Vaught Home, west of Fort Worth.\* We were honored to win our fourth Energy Value Housing Award—the most energy-efficient home in a hot climate.

**How many energy efficient homes have you built over the past ten years?**

My guess would be about 100.

**As the market grows, do you see changes in your interactions with home buyers today?**

Well, our typical homeowner is very educated about green features, and is usually involved with the process. It all starts in the design and conversations with the homeowners—goals and budget. There is usually a disconnect where goals cost more than budget, so we have to work with people to find that balance. We like to start with thoughts, ideas and a blank sheet of paper, and incorporate proper design and orientation.

**Are you trying to achieve net-zero energy in any of your homes?**

The only way to do that is with photovoltaics or wind—you have to have some way to produce energy. So what we try to do is get the home as close to zero as we can, and then if the client decides to make that investment, we will. We will start three homes this year that will either get to zero or very close.

**What are some of the most important elements of green homes today?**

Insulation is key. We're using structural insulated panels (SIPs) for the exterior envelope of the house in 95% of our projects. One of the great things about SIPs is that your air infiltration has drastically diminished, so your house is airtight.

**What is your take on the green building market today?**

I think that it is alive, well and thriving. [At Ferrier], we have more design clients than we have ever had. [MHC's] SmartMarket Reports do the best job in capturing where we are. A few years ago, I remember one saying this will be a tidal wave of change in the way that builders will build, and some builders don't even realize it is there. [Green] continues to grow at a more rapid rate. Building across the U.S. is suffering unless you're a green builder.

**“Building across the U.S. is suffering unless you are a green builder.”**