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VAIL HOME

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THE GREEN SCENE

ECO-CONSCIOUS DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION A FAST-GROWING TREND IN THE VAIL VALLEY

BY ALLEN BEST

This Beaver Creek home was at the leading edge of "eco-conscious" design when it was completed in 2002.

Strictly speaking, the Beaver Creek home of Charles and Sandy Lloyd is not "green." Its warm, rich, textured look is colored buff, as in the sandstone excavated from a Colorado quarry to make the walkways; light brown, like the great room's chestnut flooring, in a previous life the floor of a home on the East Coast; and dark brown, as in the interior beams, taken from a pier in Washington state's Puget Sound.

It's not that some homes are "green" — the symbolic keyword for "eco-conscious" — and others are not; it's that there are various shades of "green" when it refers to building homes. The Lloyd Residence, completed in 2002, hits the mark in a metaphorical sense because many of its elements are friendly to the environment, making it part of a growing trend. To coin a phrase from USA Today, "eco-friendly construction has gone mainstream."

Big yet snug

Charles Lloyd, a Dallas-based theologian, began living part-time in Vail in 1983; he met Sandy, who had a home in Eagle-Vail, 10 years later. In planning a new home together, they deliberately chose something smallish, at least by Beaver Creek standards; yet they wanted

“We really need to tighten things up. That’s what we can do, easily, to lessen our dependence upon fossil fuels and reduce our carbon footprint.” — Jim Guida

Judy Phillips Design



to host parties for their friends, as well as provide ample space for their visiting grandchildren.

Achieving these seemingly conflicting goals — big yet snug — required efficient use of space in the three-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bath home. With the collaboration of the interior designer, Judy Phillips, and the architect, Douglas DeChant, not an inch is wasted. If a bedroom wall has space in the interior for drawers, that space is used. Big yet small extends to views of the outdoors, as well; chairs and desks are strategically located to take in the ski slopes of Beaver Creek.

“Judy has an eye for using all the space available,” says Sandy Lloyd.

Because top priority for anything “green” is energy efficiency, many things that make a building “green” are not visible. A home can be “green” without having solar collectors on its roof; a home that is “snug” can be more comfortable. To efficiently prevent air from becoming stale, for example, many well-built green homes, such as the Lloyds, are equipped with air-to-air exchangers in their foundations, to retain heat when fresh air is brought in from outdoors. The Lloyd home goes one step further, utilizing a boiler system with an efficiency rating of 90 percent, 10 percent higher than average.

It all works in the spirit of a phrase popular within “green” circles: “Eat your energy-efficiency vegetables before your alternative-energy dessert.”



Judy Phillips Design

Top and above, due to the collaboration of interior designer Judy Phillips, architect Douglas DeChant and builder Jim Guida, many “green” elements of the Lloyd’s home are not obvious upon first glance.



Above, builder Jim Guida, far right, discusses specifications on-site. Right, every home at Heritage Park, a new "green" neighborhood in the Homestead area of Edwards, is designed to be eco-conscious from the start.



Jesse William Rauliff

A 'green' neighborhood

Long before the Lloyds' home in Beaver Creek was completed, the builder, Eagle-Vail-based Jim Guida, already was planning an entirely "green" neighborhood just a few miles to the west — Heritage Park, a community of 24 single-family homes 4,500 to 5,300 square feet in size in the Edwards neighborhood of Homestead.

At Heritage Park, where most homeowners are full-time residents, Guida has added

other energy-efficient, green-building ideas gleaned from workshops, magazines and his involvement with the U.S. Green Building Council. Ideas include gas-burning fireplaces with the greatest efficiency available, 94 percent; several types of insulation; extra foundation work; sealed exterior envelopes; and upgraded windows. Other ideas at Heritage Park, Guida says, include advanced framing techniques using engineered lumber, resulting in less need for virgin trees. Instead of 2x12-inch beams to support substantial weight, he uses I-joists made from flakes of wood, or sawdust, once considered waste; the flakes are glued together, yielding superior strength. Walls, meanwhile, still contain 2x4s and 2x6s for studs, but fewer of them are used. "By spacing our studs farther apart, we use less wood," Guida says, "and we increase the

"Built green is built better." — Jim Guida

amount of insulation in our envelope, which is a good thing."

At Heritage Park, low-flush toilets save not only water, but also energy, because purifying and pumping water takes a great deal of it; paints with fewer volatile organic compounds give off no unwanted gases, such as formaldehyde; on-site recycling programs re-use wood, steel and other construction materials; and lighting fixtures in some homes accept only compact fluorescent light bulbs, which use one-fifth the electricity of standard bulbs yet last seven times longer. Guida estimates these environmental "upgrades" add roughly \$20,000 to the cost of homes at Heritage Park — but the homes not only are more comfortable, they're more energy-efficient than other new homes built merely to the national building code. That yields lower utility bills. Even though "green"

homes can cost 6 to 8 percent more to build, they can cost 30 percent less to operate — and the payback on investment for some improvements in some cases is only three years.

“Energy efficiency is a gift that keeps on giving,” says Guida.

And since the Vail Valley sees the sun about 300 days per year — despite all the snow — it’s one of the better places in the United States for solar collectors. Homes at Heritage Park use solar collectors to heat hot water, for which the payback is about eight years.

Get tight

Whether for luxury homes in the Colorado Rockies or elsewhere, Guida says he hopes — and expects — what is now considered cutting-edge in green-building will become commonplace across the country within a few years. For environmental reasons, he says, we have no choice.

“We really need to tighten things up,” Guida says. “That’s what we can do, easily, to lessen our dependence upon fossil fuels and reduce our carbon footprint.” **VH**



Jesse William Ratliff

Advanced framing and insulation techniques can help contribute to as much as a 30 percent reduction in energy consumption, says local builder Jim Guida.

The cutting edge of ‘green’

Whereas the rock ‘n’ roll generation once reveled in “Live at Leeds” by The Who, now it’s skipping to the tune of “LEED,” or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a program of the U.S. Green Building Council, which certifies green-building practices.

The growing concern about human-induced global warming through the burning of greenhouse gases has powered a new awareness of the full, planetary cost of residential heating and lighting. After all, homes are responsible for 21 percent of the U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas.

Eagle-Vail-based builder Jim Guida, for whom the Lloyd Residence in Beaver Creek was his first “green” venture, says he’s always admired the work of the old craftsmen. He aims to deliver the same high quality, he says, but with materials and techniques that are on the cutting edge of green-building practices. A wall is not just a wall, he says, but rather a micro system of its own, serving multiple functions.

“Built green is built better,” Guida says.

Following Guida’s lead, other builders in the Vail Valley now are adopting “green” techniques and materials into their plans, as well. Some pioneers have turned to the heat in the earth itself, using “ground-source” heat pumps to provide heat in winter and coolness in summer; others even have harnessed the power of falling water in small, “micro-hydro” turbines to actually produce electricity at home, and cut utility bills.

Several of the valley’s largest developers, meanwhile, have staked out some rather large “green” claims. East West Partners, a trendsetter, plans to seek LEED certification for its Westin Riverfront Resort & Spa project in Avon. And Vail Resorts Development Company is planning to seek LEED certification for its Ever Vail project, west of Lionshead; initial plans were for a silver designation, the second highest of four levels of LEED certification.

Not coincidentally, the fledgling “green” revolution is being



Jesse William Ratliff

spurred on locally by new building regulations requiring greater energy efficiency. Individual towns within the valley are raising the bar for homes and residential projects. Eagle County’s new eco-building code, EcoBuild, is based on the premise that large homes are likely to have a much greater environmental impact — especially when occupied only part of the year.

Matt Scherr, director of the Eagle Valley Alliance for Sustainability, says for people who really want truly “green” homes, however, it’s best not to rely upon governments to ensure them. Instead, he says, it’s better to go with established certification models, such as LEED, in conjunction with energy-efficiency rating systems like Built Green and Energy Star.

“EcoBuild is really quite ‘green,’” Scherr says. “But I certainly think you should look further because it matters to your pocketbook, it may matter to your family’s health, and if you care about it, it matters how much impact the home has on our climate.”

— ALLEN BEST