



BUILDING PERFORMANCE

COST EFFECTIVE IDEAS THAT WORK

BY BILL LAZAR

Many of us are looking forward to better news in 2014. It's a good time to look around at some of the good work we saw at the FHC annual conference and think about using those ideas. Hopefully with more SHIP funding on the horizon, it's time to dust off our housing documents and improve on old plans.

It's always good to be looking ahead in construction, especially with new energy code upgrades. Florida's Energy Codes changed in 2012 and another increase in efficiency is predicted in two years. In new construction, those changes can be important to a healthy home. Back in the 80's, air sealing efforts were more manual. Many times they weren't that scientific, and unintended consequences were too tight sometimes unhealthy conditions.

With new building materials and construction techniques many homes are built more airtight than before. When you hear improved building performance, just think best building practices. We want to see the improved performance reflected in the sales price. When you make improvements and there is no corresponding change in appraisal, that's a dis-incentive. If the changes increase marketability, then at least there is a positive trade off. If the costs are not immediately reflected in increased value, we need to design changes as cost effectively as possible.

If you have a building partner who is not that familiar with energy efficiency, reach out to them. Most builders know they have to adapt to changes, but they want to understand why, not just because "you have to." Most would appreciate cost effective ideas that work.

Especially in affordable housing, we know that costs are critical. Designing performance can be a less expensive way to achieving efficiency than buying products. There is a lot of good work and research from some of our partners here in Florida. The Florida Solar Energy Center has produced

a white paper on "Deep Energy Retrofits" <http://fsec.ucf.edu/en/publications/pdf/FSEC-RR-444-13.pdf> on less expensive ways to conserve. The Florida Green Building Coalition has produced a handout of inexpensive ways to achieve green "Cost Effective Actions for Greening Your Home." The Florida Dept. of Agricultural and Consumer Services has created a web tool for consumers on energy consumption. <http://www.myfloridahomeenergy.com/>

There are great new tools to help define building performance. Blower doors can tell you how tight or leaky our homes are, an important detail in properly sizing air conditioning systems. Once we started using them we were able to reduce sizing on most AC systems by half a ton.



A blower door finds leaky ducts, which can bring dust, pollen or humidity into your home. On a leaky mobile home with mold and mildew problems, one of the ducts had separated from the register below the floor and was pulling in cool damp air. The blower door took us right to it. Do

you wonder why certain rooms feel warmer than others? An infra red camera can see behind the drywall and confirm if there is missing insulation, a common problem with tray ceilings or hard to insulate attic spaces. A duct test will find a leaky duct. We recently used an IR camera to pinpoint a slab leak.

There are business partners in every county who can help you showcase these best practices and convince others of the value in improved building performance. Look for green building professionals, weatherization inspectors or energy raters and ask them to meet with you. **HNN**

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