

# THE PRICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

*The True Value of Your Home Comes from the Total Package*

BY: JEREMY MEEK

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DESERT STAR CONSTRUCTION



*Interior of El Chorro Lodge, the first LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Gold certified full-service restaurant in Arizona*

## WHAT IS IT WORTH TO YOU?

*“Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.” – Warren Buffet*

Most discerning consumers understand the value of owning an aesthetically refined, high-performance car equipped with custom features and cutting edge technology. When it comes to purchasing a home, however, many settle for what would be the equivalent of a brand new Mercedes built with the guts of a ten-year-old jalopy. The home of their dreams meets their ideal aesthetic, but the systems within the home – heating and air conditioning, ventilation, electrical, integration, water treatment, etc. – are outdated and mediocre at best. What’s missing is the realization that true value comes from the total package, where a home is not only beautiful on the outside, but also built to perform exceptionally behind the scenes.

A recent trend has emerged among homeowners who are starting to see the value of building and owning a sustainable residence – where advanced technology and “green” construction unite with design and workmanship. There is one little snag: Many of those who wish to live in a well-designed, sustainable home balk at the idea of what that total package may initially cost. The upfront investment associated with building sustainably can become a deterrent for those who fail to see the benefits of owning a sustainable home, including improved indoor air quality and the associated health benefits, significant financial incentives, overall lower utility costs and a higher resale value. When fully considered, these rewards end up more than paying for your investment, proving that your sustainable home can be truly valuable in more ways than one.



*Above: Water feature at Zona Verde, first LEED certified home in Paradise Valley*

## **TRUTH IN NUMBERS**

The value of a sustainable home begins with the most obvious – the direct impact to your health and our planet. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, studies found that pollutants such as dust or gases emitted from building materials are two to five times more prevalent indoors than outdoors. This is a serious concern for the well being of those inside your home, as traditional building practices don't often take into account sustainable strategies that could potentially eliminate these risks. The Environmental Protection Agency also states that the average U.S. home emits twice as much carbon dioxide as the average passenger car, repre-

senting a large portion of the nation's carbon footprint. Additionally, residences use 74% of water in the United States each year. Statistics such as these show the significant impact that resource-efficient homes can have on our planet's overall sustainability.

## **A HOLISTIC APPROACH**

Despite all the good that a sustainable home can have for Mother Earth, there is still the initial cost that goes into building "green." The most important step you can take to minimize the initial cost of building a sustainable luxury home is to not use the resource in the first place. What exact-

*A triple-string concealed rooftop solar electric array adorns this LEED certified custom luxury residence located in North Scottsdale.*





ly does this mean? When evaluating total electricity, water and gas consumption, the highest priority beyond any single design or piece of equipment is to establish a system that minimizes the use of those resources. Many homeowners are misled into thinking that if they simply install a row of solar panels or buy a piece of “green” equipment they are optimizing the sustainability of their residence. While this is true to some degree, there are many factors that need to be taken into account during the design and building process. These include:

- Using locally sourced materials and environmentally preferred products to lessen pollution caused by transportation.
- Developing an advanced home automation system including motion detectors to turn off lights when spaces are not in use.
- Reducing potable water use through water efficient appliances and an “intelligent” landscape design and irrigation system.
- Incorporating an efficient and properly designed HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning) system to optimize indoor-outdoor air quality.

- Installing hard surface floors in place of carpet that often emits chemicals from production.

There is no silver bullet or “one size fits all” formula to building a sustainable residence, and there are many more factors to consider beyond what is listed above. Sustainability has to be approached holistically, where every aspect of the home’s livability and design is taken into account. The best way to ensure your home is fully optimized is to employ an experienced team of sustainability specialists, from your sustainable energy consultant and structural engineer to your builder, architect and interior designer, who can guide you through the most insightful plan of action to build and maintain the highest quality, most ecologically (and financially) sustainable home possible.

#### **THE BIG PAY BACK**

Also included in your plan of action toward sustainability are the incentives that go along with owning a “green” home. According to the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency ([www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)), there are currently 48 incentives, special loans and tax credit programs in the state of Arizona developed specifically to encourage energy effi-



*Exterior detail of Zona Verde*

ciency and sustainability initiatives within the home. Your team of sustainability experts should be knowledgeable of these programs and be able to properly guide you through the planning and construction process to ensure all necessary measures are completed to optimize the sustainability of your home.

## GO GREEN TO GET GREEN

With the growing trend to “Go Green” coupled with the rising cost of resources such as energy, water and gas, potential homebuyers are creating a high demand for houses that offer more than just an attractive design. According to a 2011 study conducted by the nonprofit organization Earth Advantage Institute, new houses with third-party certifications for sustainability and energy efficiency (such as LEED for Homes or Energy Star designations) sold for nine percent more than noncertified homes. That’s because today’s future homeowners are looking for properties built with sustainable features that will have a lasting effect not only on their environment, but on their budgets. Their purchasing decisions are more favorable toward a home that is sustainably savvy than one

that is not. This means that any sustainable strategies you implement today could potentially increase the overall value of your property, especially when it comes time to sell.

The same study, as reported by The Washington Post, also noted that homes marketed with sustainability certifications appeared to sell faster on average than those without. While this is very good news for those looking to sell a home optimized with sustainable features, this data provides only a snapshot of today’s real estate market. Always consult with an experienced realtor and appraiser to determine the actual value of your property and its features, including any sustainable strategies you choose to implement.

## SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

By setting your sights on the bigger picture of owning a sustainably built home, you reap the benefits of the total package: an exquisitely designed residence that will continue to offer you returns throughout its entire life cycle. Focusing on the initial cost of owning a sustainable residence is the easiest way to settle for a home that is substandard in comparison to the most advanced homes available on the market.

**The answer is simple:**

**Don't settle. Instead, choose to shift your perspective.**

There are countless benefits that come from a sustainable home, including lower utility bills, local and national incentives, a higher resale value and the preservation of our planet's precious resources. Owning a "green" home gives you the greatest overall value, where performance and beauty join as an expression of a life that abounds with quality, integrity and luxury. ❖

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*Jeremy Meek is the Sustainability Programs Manager at Desert Star Construction ([www.DesertStarConstruction.com](http://www.DesertStarConstruction.com)). He is a proud ASU Alumni with a Bachelor's Degree in Construction Management and a Master's of Philosophy in Engineering for Sustainable Development from the University of Cambridge in England.*



*Building the Best Better*®



Desert Star Construction's green building roots run deep. Our sustainable construction and remodeling expertise delivered projects like "Zona Verde," Paradise Valley's first ever LEED certified custom residence. Building sustainably with Team DSC® means you can finally have it all – award-winning design, the comforts of luxury, and the extraordinary benefits of owning a highly efficient home. 🌱



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“When people ask me what is different about a DSC home, I say it's the thousand things you don't see, but you feel.”

—Jerry Meek, *President*