



Why AVR Homebuilders builds New York ENERGY STAR[®] certified homes

Case Study

Contractor Name:
AVR Homebuilders

Location:
Yonkers, New York

Measures Implemented:

- High-quality, energy-efficient construction with minimized environmental impact

Benefits:

- Reduced energy costs compared to conventionally built homes
- High-quality construction with minimized environmental impact
- Measurable results and third-party verification for builders and buyers

Background

AVR Homebuilders enthusiastically adopted the New York ENERGY STAR[®] Certified Homes program to attain a competitive market edge, build better-quality homes, and improve the environment. “This program fulfills each objective”, reports Chief Operating Officer Mark Eickelbeck. “We’re a 100 percent New York ENERGY STAR Certified Home builder,” said Eickelbeck, who has worked with AVR Homebuilders for 23 of the company’s 50 years. “Building homes to these exacting standards is the most meaningful way we can effectively be environmentally sensitive as a builder,” he said. “Building is a high-impact industry, and I find building this type of home is the most measurable way to minimize or offset the impact on the environment.”

Eickelbeck is also realistic about the business considerations involved in that commitment. “Buyers have a lot of choices when it comes to purchasing a new home, especially in our region,” he acknowledged. AVR Homebuilders is one of a few builders in its territory building New York ENERGY STAR Certified Homes. “We have really differentiated ourselves in the market,” he explained. “We integrate the specific requirements into all of our marketing efforts. It’s a big part of our story.”

Meeting Higher Standards

In high demand, Eickelbeck finds homebuyers are now demanding homes built to New York ENERGY STAR standards. “We’re actually building a product that consumers are looking for,” he stressed. “One of the reasons we went with the New York ENERGY STAR Homes program is that it’s measurable,” he pointed out. “This program has a measurable element, and there is third-party verification,” he added, noting the program provides authentication to both builders and buyers alike.

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— *Mark Eickelbeck,*
Chief Operating Officer,
AVR Homebuilders

Eickelbeck pointed to the independent third-party Home Energy Rater’s role in confirming that a home meets New York ENERGY STAR Certified Homes’ standards. This Home Energy Rater, certified by the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET), completes performance testing and field inspections, and prepares the paperwork necessary to confirm the home does meet all program standards.

Formed in 1995 by the National Association of State Energy Officials and Energy Rated Homes of America, RESNET has developed a national market for home energy rating systems. The federal government and other authorities, including NYSERDA, recognize RESNET’s standards for verification of building energy performance for such programs as federal tax incentives. The mortgage industry also recognizes RESNET standards for capitalizing a building’s energy performance in the mortgage loan.

This authoritative measure functions as “a third set of eyes overseeing the construction project, another layer of inspection,” Eickelbeck said. “That’s a huge part of achieving the energy conservation, and energy conservation is also closely related to how the construction is implemented.”

Happy Homebuyers

The veteran builder noted that program requirements apply to the specific materials and products used in the home as well as improved construction techniques. “You really end up with a much better-built home, not just a home that’s more energy efficient.”

However, those techniques do require enhanced training for all AVR Homebuilders’ staff. “There is a learning curve and a commitment that’s involved before you reach a level of efficiency,” said Eickelbeck.

Once his customers are living in their new home, and there’s no question about value. “They definitely do come back and say, ‘Yes, there’s no doubt: my bills are low and I’m very happy with that fact,’” he said. In addition, Eickelbeck feels that builders have an obligation to do their part in this industry to minimize their environmental impact. “This is really, to me, the best and most measurable way to do it,” he said.

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