



**804 Petra Pass in Mt. Tabor Meadows was announced Blacksburg's first home to receive LEED® Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).**

Submitted photo

## *New home makes neighbors green with efficiency envy*

### BLACKSBURG

— Today, the Lewis family has something no one else in Blacksburg does. Their home at 804 Petra Pass in Mount Tabor Meadows was announced Blacksburg's first home to receive LEED® Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

It is only the second home to be certified LEED in southwest Virginia; the other is in Lexington.

"After our first month living here, our monthly utility bills went from over \$700 to about \$180," said homeowner Chris Lewis. "That's saying a lot considering we have seven people in our family ranging from my older father to my granddaughter."

To be exact, Lewis' electricity bill has averaged \$185.62 per month since March, along with a \$20 per month natural gas bill to run a four-bedroom, 3.5 bath house totaling 3,402 square feet including their unfinished basement. And

while their new home is 1,200 square feet smaller than their previous home in a nearby subdivision, there are now four more people living at the Lewis home.

"Our two grown sons, and my daughter and granddaughter have all rejoined our family and moved back in due to financial pressures," said Lewis. "This came at a time when my husband, Greg, and I wanted to downsize our living expenses."

That's where an energy-efficient home and Green Valley Builders came in. Like the Lewises, we hear a lot of buzz about green building, but how can we tell what is "real" and what is just fluff? One of the ways you can tell is whether or not the home is certified by a national third party program like the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED for Homes program. For the homebuyer, LEED is like the nutrition label on the side of a cereal box;

it clearly labels in measurable terms that the home has healthy, green, efficient features that have been third party verified.

Lewis says the house has actually exceeded their expectations on all points, as has the neighborhood.

Mt. Tabor Meadows is the first entirely green community in Blacksburg, with every home built using green building standards to meet EarthCraft and ENERGY STAR certifications.

Mt. Tabor Meadows and the Lewis home were built by Green Valley Builders, a family business owned by brothers Jason and Justin Boyle.

Jason and Justin were students of Greg Lewis at Blacksburg High School. Running into each other years later, they began learning about the community the Boyles were building and knew right away it was some-

thing they had to be a part of.

Located three miles from downtown Blacksburg, 804 Petra Pass focuses heavily on reducing energy use. The home features low-e argon windows, high efficiency

lighting fixtures, compact fluorescent bulbs and both spray foam and recycled cellulose insulation.

Other energy efficient upgrades include tankless water heaters, programmable thermostats, high efficiency electric heat

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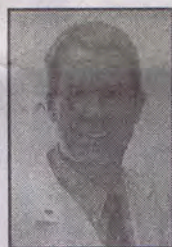


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pump and air conditioners, as well as mechanical ventilation. Solar hot water is currently installed, as well as necessary wiring for future solar photovoltaic systems.

"Living in a LEED-certified home not only means you will be saving money and precious resources, it also means that it's more durable than a non-certified home," said Justin Boyle, co-owner and CFO of Green Valley Builders.

As a result of incorporating energy saving products and technologies, 804 Petra Pass has achieved a 51 Home Energy Rating Systems (HERS) score. That means the Lewis' were able to make their home 49 percent more energy efficient than the standard home. (Homes must achieve a minimum score of 86 - on a 100-point scale - to be deemed ENERGY STAR qualified). According to the U.S. Department of Energy, there are 120 million homes in the U.S., and 2 million new homes are constructed each year. Combine that with the fact that the average size of new homes has doubled in the past 50 years, and it's no wonder that the residential building sector is responsible for 22 percent of total energy consumption and 74 percent of water usage.

"Those statistics alone are enough to see that the residential building industry is part of the problem, but it can also be part of the solution," said Monica Rokicki-Guajardo, LEED AP BD+C, Chair of the Southwest USGBC Chapter.

*Copy provided by Erika Williams*

## Cleanup

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Blacksburg, officials made drastic changes to its cleanup during last year's budget process. Officials decided to have a spring and fall