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allow for improved insulation. Better insulation makes it easier and more affordable for people to heat and cool their homes, with less wasted energy.

Sean and Laura's green building process has proven a success, and not just with homeowners. Last year one of their homes, the Strittmatter house (pictured above), won the **Asheville Parade of Homes** for craftsmanship, viewers choice, and for *greenest* home.

"It was the icing on the cake," affirms Sean. "This is a concept we came up with ourselves – to take homeowners full cycle, from concept to move-in and beyond, as they learn to actually live green. It's so great to see the whole thing come to fruition." Laura agrees. "It's very gratifying," she says. "I feel like we're not just handing the client a finished product and walking away. We're educating them, and improving and enriching their lives. It's a great feeling."



BEAUTIFUL HOMES BY ASHEVILLE BUILDER & DESIGN TEAM EMBODY A "DESIGN GREEN, BUILD GREEN, LIVE GREEN" CONCEPT

Asheville's lush, green forests and stunning mountain landscapes have long been a draw for nature lovers seeking to build a home in an unspoiled natural paradise. Sean Sullivan, owner of Living Stone Construction and his wife, Laura Sullivan, owner of ID.ology Interior Design team up to not only help their clients build their dream home, but to ensure that Asheville stays unspoiled for future generations through their green building and design process. North Carolina Design talked to them to hear more about what true green building really entails, and the surprising ways it enriches and enhances the lives of their clients.

Sean and Laura have quickly become the go-to experts for green building in the Asheville area. Sean notes that, while many people associate green building with energy conservation, there is much more to it than that. "Being Energy Star compliant alone doesn't make you green," he explains. "Energy Star is just one subset of green building. There are nine categories to the green checklist, including local sourcing, indoor air quality, water conservation, landscape and drainage, and energy conservation. Every home Living Stone builds is Energy Star and NC Greenbuilt certified."

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Laura tells us that building green also goes far beyond construction. “There are a lot of interior design elements and selections that play a part in creating a green home,” she says. “We consider the materials that go into the cabinetry and the furnishings, the type of paints and finishes used, and the lighting selections. We also focus on the healthy value of the fabrics and fillings in the rugs, pillows, drapes and cushions.”

Sean and Laura are committed to sourcing products locally, from vendors they can trust. “We focus on building relationships with local craftsmen who provide green, healthy products,” Laura offers. Sean adds “We strive to find people who are directly in our area. Green standards require that products are sourced from within 500 miles, but we try to keep it within 200 miles.”

Laura and Sean are also dedicated to educating homeowners about the benefits of green building. “When you ask people what green means to them, they don’t always have a clear answer,” says Sean. “They do understand lower energy consumption and how it can help them get a return on their investment. But they aren’t always aware of all the ways a green home can impact their lives. When we explain to them that statistically people are happier, healthier and more productive in green homes, they really value that added benefit.”

Homeowners often don’t realize that building green is as much about individual health as it is about the environment. “Indoor air quality is the primary reason that we build green,” notes Sean. “A lot of homes don’t ‘breathe’ the way they should. Then homeowners make poor product selections, which give off toxic elements. Those elements get trapped in the air, and are continuously breathed in. We make sure that our clients’ homes are properly ventilated, and that they choose products that promote good air quality.”

Homeowners sometimes struggle to fully trust Sean and Laura’s green building process. “It’s really important for our clients to have faith in the value that building green will add to their homes, and their lives,” stresses Laura. “The more they embrace the process, the more benefits they will receive. Those clients who have let us lead them have seen that they got the exact house they wanted – plus they feel happier and healthier. They tell us they wouldn’t change a thing.”

“We go so much further than just using a few eco-friendly materials,” affirms Sean. “We design green, build green, and teach our clients to live green, so they can have happier, healthier lives. It’s rewarding to know that we go above and beyond to help them meet this underlying, important, and often unrecognized need.”



ASHEVILLE BUILDER & INTERIOR DESIGNER DUO CREATE BEAUTIFUL GREEN HOMES, ALLOWING CLIENTS TO LIVE HAPPIER, HEALTHIER LIVES



To live in the Asheville area is to love the beauty of nature and to be taken in by the quiet strength of the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains. In our previous feature, we talked to Asheville builder Sean Sullivan, owner of Living Stone Construction, and his wife, Laura Sullivan of ID.ology Interior Design about the couple’s unique “design green, build green, live green” concept. The concept has earned them success and a reputation as one of Asheville’s leading green building teams. Today, we’re focusing on the products and techniques that help them give their clients the homes they’ve always dreamed

of, while building an exceptionally energy efficient and green home and encouraging them to live greener, fuller, and happier lives in their new spaces.

Product selection for a green home requires careful thought and a commitment to green principles. “Everything you choose has a consequence and a benefit,” observes Sean. “You have to weigh every single decision carefully, because you want your clients to have the best possible products.”

“You have three main types of green products: recycled, natural and recyclable,” notes Laura. “From a green standpoint, it’s most important to focus on recycled and natural products. You also have different levels of healthy and green. For example, the greenest area rugs have water-based backing and no dyes. Then you have options with the healthiest, most natural dyes, and so on and so forth. There are a wide variety of different colors and finishes available – it all depends on the extent you’re willing to go with the green concept.”

Those who want to live green don’t have to settle in any way. There are a wealth of great products currently available, with new ones cropping up all the time. “You have low VOC paints and formaldehyde-free finishes,” says Laura. “You have rugs made from corn sugar, or even recycled Pepsi bottles. You have plumbing options that have been redesigned to work well with low water usage, and you have prefinished floors that are left to offgas in a warehouse, rather than add toxins to your home.”

Sean uses many innovative green products and techniques during the building process. “Our guys are now using dustless sanders to finish floors,” he notes. “We also use advanced framing techniques, which cut down on wasted wood and

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