

Builder Concept Home 2010

A Home for the New Economy design by Marianne Cusato

Version 1.0

FAQs

What inspired this project? Housing industry professionals are looking for practical and profitable solutions to survive in the recession and thrive in the recovery. BUILDER magazine wanted to continue its 12-year legacy of concept homes built in conjunction with IBS with a house that was designed to reflect and respect what housing industry professionals are facing in the current economy, so they reached out to Marianne Cusato who was developing a concept called the New Economy Home. The home illustrates a new paradigm that focuses on value, performance, efficiency, comfort, and timeless design.

Why is this project important? The housing industry is at a crossroads. How and what we build moving forward will greatly impact our economy and our environment – both individually and as a nation. The goal of the Builder Concept Home and Marianne Cusato's New Economy Home is to create a dialog in the industry and with homeowners about the choices we make for our homes and communities. It is possible to live well within our means, but it requires a new approach to building and design – a new architecture for the new economy.

What are the key features of the house?

The key features of this house are adaptability, sustainability, buildability and livability. These features are illustrated in the Adaptable Suite, which allows the house to work well at multiple live stages; a simple, easy-to-build and resource-efficient footprint and structural layout and building forms; a full-length, full-depth (8-foot) front porch; interior spaces that flow together but serve dedicated functions; high-performance windows on multiple walls to allow daylight throughout the day and passive cross-ventilation to reduce energy demand; closet storage systems and cabinet accessories that optimize capacity and storage space; minimized hall and circulation space to maximize living area.

What is an Adaptable Suite? The Adaptable Suite is a suite on the first floor that can live as part of the main house or be separated out on its own. The adaptable suite is the epitome of the home's sustainable value and ability to accommodate any personal economy. It features a private entry and is roughed for a kitchenette to serve as an income-producing apartment; its location enables it to serve as an informal family room for a young family or as a private yet accessible suite/apartment for an elderly in-law or bounce-back child; as the owners age and don't want to (or can't) climb stairs, the space can be their suite.

What is a New Economy Home? Concepts include making (and thinking in terms of) long-term instead of short-term investments; true sustainability instead of merely "green"; actual, tangible value instead of gratuity and disposability; community instead of suburban sprawl and isolation, all of which are reflected in this house.

Who is the target homeowner? This house represents a solution to the demand for smaller, higher quality and better designed homes that will hold value for generations. Given its adaptability, the house is suited to buyers along the entire spectrum, from young first-timers to families to empty nesters ... as well as multi-generational and income-producing situations. The house conforms to the personal economy of the owners, whatever that may be and whenever it changes. Instead of purchasing a new home every time there is a life change—far more difficult to do in the current and emerging economy—the owners can stay put and reap the benefits of a long-term housing investment and an established community. Also, while the house is designed to be built efficiently and for low maintenance, it also allows various levels of finish, from economical to high-end ... depending on the buyers' personal economy/budget.

For more information, visit www.BuilderConceptHome2010.com

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How is the house sustainable? The most sustainable building is one that someone cares enough about to want to maintain over time. It must meet the needs of the owners - by adapting with them as their lives evolve; it must be comfortable to live in and easy to maintain; it must also be something that they love. This is true sustainability. In addition to these elements of sustainability, a New Economy Home incorporates several technological elements that are sustainable. It features durable low-maintenance materials (e.g., fiber-cement siding and trim, engineered roofing, flooring, and structural lumber); it has an efficient footprint and building plan/forms that reduce the resources (and costs) needed to build it; it has high performance windows, which reduce solar gain; it has a high-efficiency HVAC system designed to operate in conditioned space and can be built to the highest green standards.

What makes this house buildable? The compact simple footprint and building forms is easy to construct while reducing energy demand once built; the budget is placed where you can touch and feel - in elements such as an 8-foot deep front porch – rather than gratuitous gables or other superfluous ornamentation.

What do you mean by a 'livable' house? The house lives comfortably in a compact footprint, thanks to some shared footage that enables long sightlines, plenty of daylight and views to the outside, and 9-foot ceiling heights. Rooms are space-efficient yet ample for their purpose (e.g., sleeping, cooking, dining). And, since the home is adaptable, it can conform to various living/household situations, even as they change over time.

What is a virtual house? A virtual house is a photo realistic interactive model of the house, built online. Building a virtual show house affords many things. It enables a far deeper level of content than a sticks-and-bricks house tour; it allows users to enjoy personal, custom tours, 24/7; it shows builders how homes can be effectively marketed and sold over the Internet; it allows in-depth education on the building science behind the plan, the walls and the ceiling; it allows the house to remain "open" for tours beyond the four-day builder show and therefore reach more industry professionals and consumers; and it saves natural resources.

Where can this house be built? Can it be adapted to different climates? The house can be built anywhere. It can be built to manage any climate condition and/or code requirements. Designer Marianne Cusato offers regional elevations for four different regions: Charleston, S.C., Austin, Tex., Olympia, Wash., and Des Moines, Iowa. These four locations are among the top 20 healthiest housing markets according to Hanley Wood's Market Intelligence on US Housing Markets and represent different climate zones and aesthetics.

Are there any built examples? Yes, the first New Economy Homes are being built in Warwick, New York at a development called Warwick Grove and in North Augusta, South Carolina in a development called Hammond's Ferry. (see www.Warkickgrove.com and www.HammondsFerry.com) Several more will be starting construction in early 2010.

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