

You are building better houses

Just before sitting down to write this note, I overheard *Fine Homebuilding* editor Justin Fink say to our art directors, "This is the most important story we've ever published." Coming from a guy steeped in how-to, who values the importance of each nail driven, this comment caught my attention. I knew right away that he was talking about our editor at large Kevin Ireton's article, "Why Don't We Build Better Houses?" (pp. 70-75).

When we asked Kevin to answer this question, we had some expectations of what he'd find: cost and risk, lack of knowledge and information, the skills gap. Kevin did find all this—but he also found more fundamental problems that come from the way we value homes. We being appraisers, lenders, and, of course, homebuyers.

We've created a shortsighted market where buyers need to pack as much resale value as possible into their initial costs because that's all appraisers will tally and all lenders will underwrite. More insulation, more efficient heating and cooling equipment, and solar panels have no value in the market. Sustainability, resiliency, and human health fall by the wayside.

Kevin's article isn't all bad news; as you'll see, the solutions to these complex issues are simpler than they appear. There is other good news in this issue, too: *You are building better houses.*

Of the six award-winning homes featured here, two are producing more energy than they consume and another is averaging zero energy. One is testing and pushing the boundaries of modern building science, while another is bridging the gap between cultures. And yet another has made perhaps one of the greatest impacts we can make by updating an outdated home to last another 100 years.

I agree with Justin: Kevin's article is important. The building industry at large is doing a poor job by not providing quality houses, and we need to understand why for things to improve. But it's also important to recognize that all of the architects and builders whose work is featured here are building better homes. And if you read *FHB*, you probably are too. Every day at the drafting table or on the job site, you are proving that you know exactly what to design and precisely how to build it. So, when the housing market wakes up, you'll be ready. For this, you all deserve an award.

—BRIAN PONTOLILLO, design editor



PRACTICAL BUILDING SCIENCE



REBORN BY REMODEL



SMALL AND SUSTAINABLE



TRADITIONAL AND DURABLE



MAKING SURPLUS ENERGY



SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS