



**THIS TUSCAN-STYLE HOME** in Palisade, which features a distinctive low-pitch tile roof, is one of several homes Gary Poush has built in the Grand Valley that conform to Colorado Built Green standards. The overhangs on the roof are a broader than a normal Tuscan-style home to provide more shade on the southern side of the home. Such details are part of the “integrated design” concept that make homes more energy efficient.

# Library talk to shed light on ‘green’ building

*Speaker is a passionate advocate of building earth-friendly homes*

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It’s not easy being green.

Generally, people who are conscientious about the environment and want to build an “earth-friendly” home have to pay more in up-front costs.

Those costs are mitigated over the life of the home with lower energy bills. But sometimes those up-front costs can make people balk.

A local builder who has specialized in building energy-efficient homes using a concept known as “integrated design,” will give a talk at the main branch of the Mesa County Public Library District Tuesday, Oct. 18, to help people understand the housing industry’s impact on the environment.

Gary Poush’s talk, “What Every Homeowner Needs to Know about Healthy, Energy-Efficient Homes” will begin at 7 p.m. and the audience is invited to bring questions.

The talk will cover energy efficiency in the building envelope and thermal

performance; the advent of “high-performance” homes, achieving indoor air quality through nontoxic materials and whole-house systems, and the different certification programs for homes, such as Energy Star and Colorado Built Green.

Poush is a passionate advocate of wisely designed architecture. His company, Serra Construction, Inc, has pioneered energy-efficient, high-performance homes in Grand Junction, including nine certified Built Green houses. Poush has 30 years of building experience, from remodeling century-old homes to designing new houses in Oregon, Wyoming and Colorado. As education chair of the Home Builders Association, he has brought conferences for homeowners, builders and architects to the Grand Valley, and gives talks to local civic organizations.

Poush said he usually gives a little personal background when making speaking appearances to give people context as to how he became a green builder.

Growing up in rural northern Minnesota, he had an idyllic childhood “roaming like a young wild animal,” around the forest, bogs and lakes. That connection to the outdoors and nature stayed with him through college, where he studied the natural sciences and got

exposure to the early environmental movement.

Later, as he got involved in the building trades, he couldn’t ignore the fact that architecture and building methods have an impact on the environment.

“That really pushed me to learn what was happening in the green building area,” he said. Since 2001, he has been promoting his services as a builder of high-performance homes that use minimal energy for heating and cooling. “We’re the only company that’s marketing in that niche,” Poush said. “That’s our identity.”

Using an integrated design system means analyzing all the systems in the house and making them work together to minimize energy usage. It’s situating a house on a lot with the proper orientation to the sun and wind. It’s placing windows in the proper location so they provide light, but not too much heat in the summer. It’s building broader overhangs for the roof to provide shade and making the tightest building envelope possible. Integrated design also factors in earth-friendly building materials, like blow-in cellulose made from recycled cardboard for insulation.

Poush will explain the integrated design concept in greater detail during his talk.

It’s difficult to quantify cost differ-

ences for using green building concepts, Poush said, because there is no single standard by which you can call a home green. But there are incremental steps homebuyers can take to have a “greener” home.

At the very basic level of making a house energy efficient is making it “tight,” so that it doesn’t leak heat or cool air. For the cost of upgrading windows and spending more on insulation, a homeowner can improve energy efficiency. But there are high-end concepts, like geothermal heating, that can be a lot more expensive.

Poush said recent weather phenomenon, like the growing intensity of hurricanes, are driving people’s consciousness about the environment. Some scientists think there’s a clear link to global warming and increased hurricane strength.

But the money-saving aspect of green building is as much a motivator for consumers as being conscientious about the environment, he said. Still, most of his customers seem to be approaching him from an ecological perspective.

“They’re thinking about their commitment to the world at large and the way they spend their money. It’s the kind of person who would get on a waiting list to buy a hybrid car.”