

## **Seven homes in five days: Yikes!**

Sunday, October 10, 2010

### **Day 1, Monday, Sept. 20**

**6:34 a.m.**

The sun is climbing above the Greensboro horizon, exposing a fully engaged construction site.

Countless building professionals committed to the task at hand are busy on this first of a five-day home-raising extravaganza we call “Raising Roofs: Builders for Habitat.” General contractors and subcontractors are beginning the daunting task of constructing six homes and remodeling a seventh, all in one workweek.

These homes will be built for deserving families who have been vetted and coached through the Habitat for Humanity of Greater Greensboro program. These families will have worked on the construction of other Habitat houses — only professionals will be used on this project — and through the program will obtain a no-interest mortgage.

On top of all this, the new homes will be built to Energy Star certification standards. According to [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov), to earn the designation a home “must meet strict guidelines for energy efficiency set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These homes are at least 15 percent more energy efficient than homes built to the 2004 International Residential Code, and include additional energy-saving features that typically make them 20-30 percent more efficient than standard homes.”

The homes will also be certified green through the National Association of Home Builders green standard, a comprehensive green building program that examines all aspects of home construction and its effects on the environment and the homeowners that will be living in it.

As one of the 21 general contractors, it is now time for me to put this pencil behind my ear, holster up my tool belt and get to work.

### **Day 2, Tuesday, Sept. 21**

**10:07 a.m.**

Having returned from one of my other job sites, I am surveying the incredible amount of work that has been accomplished in little more than a day. The homes are all framed, most with roof shingles installed and siding in progress. Plumbers, electricians and HVAC contractors are finishing up their rough-in. Insulation and then drywall will be complete before the day is over, though much of the work will be done after dark. A duct blaster test will be performed on our building team’s home today to check for leaks in the duct system. We want the conditioned air generated from the HVAC system to arrive intact at its intended location — the living space of the home and not the attic. While typical homes, according to [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov), leak approximately 20 percent, we will be required to tighten our ducts to below 3 percent.

### **Day 3, Wednesday, Sept. 22**

**7:12 a.m.**

It is a bit less hectic this morning. Sprinklers rotate across newly sodded yards as trim carpenters strap on tool belts in preparation to set doors and cope baseboard. Drywall dust is bellowing from the open windows of our home as the walls are being sanded for our trim crew to begin. We hope to finish the trim by lunch so that the paint crew can get started. Low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints, as well as cabinetry made with formaldehyde-free materials and finishes, will be used on all the homes to improve the indoor air quality for its inhabitants.

### **Day 4, Thursday, Sept. 23**

**10:49 a.m.**

I arrived at sunrise but was unable to enter anything in my journal until now as I immediately became engaged in the next steps for our home. Floor coverings are in place. Cabinetry is being installed, as well as Energy Star lighting, while grass is being sown around the yard. I am getting ready to climb into the attic with my caulk gun. I will be micro-sealing every possible penetration between the ceiling and the attic, including around all lights, fans, smoke detectors, HVAC supply registers and drywall joints. We have a wager with another builder for a cold beverage on whose house will test best. I will gladly spend \$20 on caulk and two hours in a sweltering attic to win a \$2 bet for the satisfaction that goes along with winning and knowing that we are building an extremely energy-efficient home for a deserving family.

### **Day 5, Friday, Sept. 24**

**6:57 a.m.**

It is much quieter this morning. The trash bins have been towed away and workers are filing in at a much slower rate. Our plumber was on site at 6 a.m. to set the kitchen sink and check all fixtures for potential leaks so that we could receive our final plumbing inspection this morning. We have a long laundry list of miscellaneous items to take care of today that will culminate in a final inspection and a "blower door test." This test checks the building envelope for leaks. While the duct blaster made sure the conditioned air arrived safely to the conditioned space, the blower door checks that the conditioned air stays in the conditioned space and does not leak to the outside. All in all we feel like our efforts are reaping a well-constructed home that will be affordable to maintain, healthy to live in and have minimal environmental impact.

We are all looking forward to the dedication ceremony later today and most of all, our cold beverage!

### **Day 6, Saturday, Sept. 25**

**6:57 a.m.**

Fast asleep.