

# Is Building Green Right for You?

By Dwight Miller, PhD, CPE

New Mexico is very friendly to “green” building. The Ancestral Puebloans lived in sun-drenched cliff dwellings in winter and shade in summer. We pioneered earthships, adobe, rammed earth, and straw-bale construction, and now we have generous tax incentives. To wit, Susie Marbury at the State Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Dept. has a \$5M annual fund to credit NM taxpayers up to \$22k for a LEED-H Certified Platinum home. While Federal solar tax credits are slated to expire in 2008, NM solar tax credits go through 2015.

Regardless, “going green” involves an interdependent set of personal decisions that take into account your health, site, budget, long-term plans, and commitment to the environment. Some examples: 1) Recovering investment in green technologies can take several years if paid for in cash, but if mortgaged, utility savings/income can offset higher payments—and the ROI improves as energy prices escalate. 2) Energy-Star appliances use less electricity and water, but often use lighter-duty components and may not last as long. 3) Straw-bale walls cannot be beat for economic R-factor, but they may not be the right choice for people who are extremely sensitive to molds.

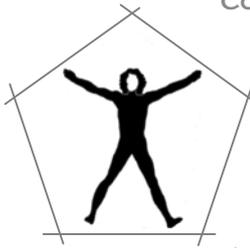
As a USGBC member and a LEED for Homes consultant, I help my clients establish a values profile, comprising 30 dimensions of home design, including healthy materials, universal access, and sustainable design. We use this along with lifestyle, residential history, and other factors to systematically plan a home that enhances long-term comfort and satisfaction, reduces the carbon footprint, and saves the owners five to ten times my fee.

Let’s honor the Land of Enchantment by planning wisely and employing green-design technologies that best meet our needs.

*Dwight Miller is an environmental design consultant, who has degrees in engineering and psychology, and a background in human-factors engineering. He is also a Certified Professional Ergonomist and has taught courses on human-centered design at UNM’s School of Architecture. For more information, go to [www.RightHomeConsulting.com](http://www.RightHomeConsulting.com) or call 934-6718.*

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