

Three questions for intown Atlanta healthy home builder

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Builder and renovator Dennis McConnell turns intown Atlanta homes exuding character into efficient, healthy spaces.

His focus often is on improving the home's HERS (Home Energy Rating System), an industry standard that measures a home's energy efficiency and performance. A typical resale home has a 130 HERS rating and a standard new home has a 100 rating, according to the Residential Energy Services Network (resnet.us), an independent, non-profit that creates national training and certification standards for HERS raters and home energy survey professionals.

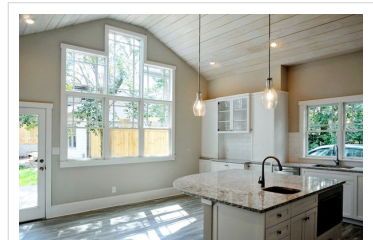
So the lower HERS rating, the better. A new 5,300-square-foot home in Brookhaven recently built by McConnell earned a 58 HERS rating. A renovated 1,715-square-foot home in Virginia-Highland earned a 60 HERS rating, which was good for a home dating to 1923, said McConnell, owner of Healthy House of Georgia.

McConnell, who was trained by the American Lung Association to build certified homes that reduce air pollutants, answered three questions about obstacles and tips for homeowners.

1. What's a key step homeowners should take in making a home more energy-efficient?

The biggest single thing to do with an intown home is to make sure the basement and/or crawl space is dry and the air in that space is separate from the house. The basement is typically where the heating and air conditioning system goes. If you have a leak, that air flows freely throughout the home.

2. What major changes did you make in the Virginia-Highland renovation?



A Virginia-Highland home built in 1923 has new insulation, among other changes, to make it a more efficient, healthy space. Photo Credit: Dennis McConnell

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A 5,500-square-foot custom home in Brookhaven was designed by Healthy House of Georgia with character and a focus on air quality, and water and energy efficiency. Photo Credit: Dennis McConnell

This particular house, it had many problems. It was a duplex when we started, on a crawl dug-out basement. In order to make that house work, we had to do an encapsulated crawl space. It was done so we had better control over where the air came from. We ended up foaming the walls with Icynene (a spray foam insulation) in order to get a sealed space.

3. What extent do clients go to to determine if something is healthy for their home?

I built a home for a lady who was allergic to everything. She slept with a bag of tile grout. She got up next day all puffy and congested. We weren't going to use it. That was the most extreme.

Finding a green builder

Healthy House of Georgia, owned by builder Dennis McConnell, is among metro Atlanta builders listed on Porch.com. The website partners with Home Innovation Research Labs (homeinnovation.com), which certifies builders and remodelers under the National Green Building Standard program. For Georgia, Home Innovation Research Labs has certified:

- 22 single-family homes
 - 18 apartment buildings, representing 1,829 apartments
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