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### Can a house be green and practical too?

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#### *At the Trail*

Published: Tuesday, November 4, 2008 1:05 AM CST

Jan Wrede - Cibolo Nature Center

What are the best green choices for a remodel or a new home in the Texas Hill Country? Just how expensive are these new green options in the home building industry? Where can you get the most current information to help you make your own "green" decisions?

A Sustainable Concept House, designed for LEED platinum certification, is now being built by Karen and Griz Adams on a 1/2-acre lot in Tapatio Springs near Boerne.

The theme of their new home is "practical sustainability." The Adams are building a traditional family home that will use many non-traditional systems such as passive-solar water heating, rainwater harvesting, geothermal home heating and cooling, as well as sustainable building materials.

It is designed by Boerne architect Ben Adam, AIA, and nestles into a gently sloping hill, among old oak trees.

Karen says, "Our house is all about water and energy conservation. For us sustainable means using smart, green practices, products and materials that make our home super energy and water efficient. It also is long-lasting so that what we do won't have to be replaced in our lifetime."

The Sustainable Concept House will use rainwater for all potable needs. Gray water will be stored and used for landscape irrigation. It is designed as a "healthy home" with high efficiency insulation that is free of formaldehyde. All adhesives, paints and finishes will produce no or very low levels of volatile gases.

The home will be part of a medical study examining the impact of home environment on allergy and asthma, while evaluating how a "healthy house" can improve quality of life.

Ground-breaking was in September and completion is scheduled for summer 2009. Today, preliminary excavation for the home and two 20,000-gallon rainwater storage tanks has been completed.

The 250-degree geothermal wells have been dug. The slab has been poured and the initial framing is in progress. This is an exciting phase in which the new home is finally taking shape!

At a Sustainable Concept House Seminar on Saturday, Nov. 15, Griz Adams will give a project overview. He will explain why and how a tradition-loving family is going out on a limb to build a green home. Griz is an entertaining speaker who will answer your questions and has tons of practical advice.

The seminar also includes speakers on four of the Sustainable Concept House's most important systems. If you are a professional homebuilder or just curious, this is an excellent opportunity to learn from carefully selected experts. The home's designer and architect Ben Adam will talk about many passive solar orientation designs and explain what LEED certification means.

Ray Butler, a sub-contractor for the Sustainable Concept House, is owner of Southwest Geothermal in Bulverde. He will show the intriguing details and challenges of installing a geothermal heating and cooling system in the Texas Hill Country. It is surprisingly cost-effective even when the wells have to be drilled through rock.

Tony Stephenson, owner of SolarTexas and an expert on solar water equipment, will present the passive solar hot water system selected for the Adams' home.

Bob Mial, owner of Eco-Home, Inc. in Fredericksburg is the Sustainable Concept House's general contractor. He has a personal interest and dedication to using sustainable materials and building "healthy" homes. Come

and hear his story and learn all about the safest building materials choices available.

Visit the Sustainable Concept House website at [www.boernegreenhouse.com/index.html](http://www.boernegreenhouse.com/index.html) and Karen Adams' green house building blog at [blogs.mysanantonio.com/weblogs/Sustainable\\_Concept\\_House/](http://blogs.mysanantonio.com/weblogs/Sustainable_Concept_House/)

The Sustainable Concept House seminar will be in the Cibolo Nature Center auditorium from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 15. For more information and to register, call 830-249-4616 today! Limited seating is available. This is the first of quarterly CNC programs on the Adams' green building project.

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