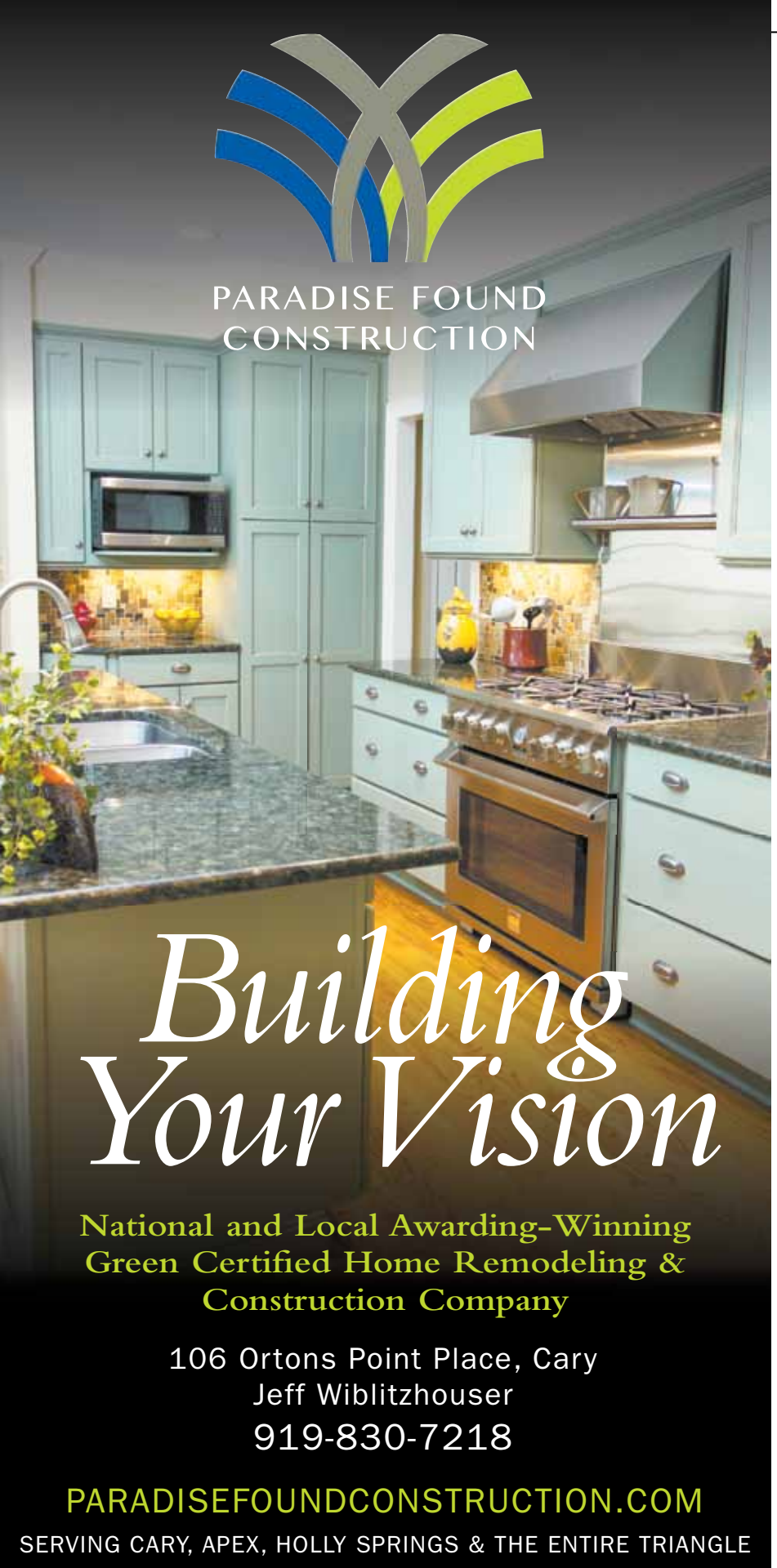

Remodel to **Green Certified**

The unexpected email came in around noon on a Friday.

"Hey! I'm Mary Sue's daughter and I wanted to thank you for doing such a beautiful job remodeling my parents' home! I truly love everything that you did to transform this wonderful home for the young couple that will bring new life to it. Best of luck and success with your future endeavors. Mary Sue K."

Mary Sue's parents, Mary Sue and Oscar M., built their new brick ranch home on a quiet cul-de-sac on Picardy Place in the Oak Park subdivision in Raleigh in 1963, and moved in January of 1964. After their two children grew up and left home, they lived there together until Oscar's passing in 1995. Mary Sue continued to live in the home until her health declined and she moved to an Assisted Living facility in early 2012. Her Power of Attorney (POA) and long-time family friend was tasked with selling her home as quickly as possible in order to return the funds to her estate to provide for her continuing long-term care.

The home still had the original electrical and plumbing fixtures, cabinets, flooring, and door hardware; and was largely un-insulated. Dark wood paneling and solid doors separating the front of the house from the back presented a dark and outdated environment.

Based on the sluggish Real Estate market conditions and a professional assessment of the property, her POA concluded that in its current condition the home would sit on the market for many months and that he would eventually be forced to take a fire-sale offer. He asked Cary NC Builder Jeff Wiblitzhouser, President of Paradise Found Construction, to take on the task of completely renovating the house.

Wiblitzhouser understood the market value of not only updating the home to reflect current interior design trends, but also of taking the necessary steps to significantly increase the homes energy and water usage efficiency while these updates were being done. He convinced Mary Sue's POA to make a modest investment in air-sealing measures and adding additional insulation, and install EPA Energy Star Qualified electrical fixtures and appliances, EPA Water Sense rated toilets and plumbing fixtures, and CFL lighting at little to no extra cost.

He called in Durham's Southern Energy Management to conduct performance testing and validate the efficiency improvements in energy and water, as well as the air-sealing and indoor air quality improvements and other improvements necessary for the Home to be Certified Green under the International Code Council (ICC) 700-2008 National Green Building Standard™ developed in partnership with the National Association of Homebuilders Association (NAHB) and approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

Additional Green features of the home included refinishing the existing hardwood floors with a no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) clear coat finish, installing durable next generation porcelain tile, and using no VOC carpet and paints to create a healthy and light-filled living environment.

As a result of the updates and Green Certification, the home was sold to a young family within 3 days of construction completion.

The Importance of Green Certified Building

Smaller single-family homes were built in abundance during the Economic Expansion following the end of WW II. These homes represent

a significant percentage of dwellings in many communities, and are often in neighborhoods that are in desirable locations in the community, have larger lot sizes, and established traffic patterns.

At the time they were constructed, many of the building science techniques and products relating to energy and water efficiency, the minimization of air intrusion and leakage were largely unavailable or unknown. The harmful effects of chemical off-gassing of common home construction material, furniture, and cleaning chemicals were also unknown or misunderstood.

These older homes inherently have significant energy and water usage inefficiencies built into them. But they can be easily renovated to remove the inefficiencies with a relatively modest investment in insulation, water usage, air sealing, and energy efficient heating and cooling equipment, light fixtures and appliances; all of which add up to huge cost savings.

The Value of Revitalizing our Existing Communities

Rather than demolish structurally sound and functional older homes to make way for larger homes with larger carbon foot-prints, renovating them to reflect current design trends and amenities that today's buyers want, and at the same time increasing their energy and water efficiency and indoor air quality to reduce the overall cost of ownership make these homes attractive to home buyers. It provides an opportunity to bring younger families into these older neighborhoods, giving them new life, and at the same time raising community property values.

Economic Value and Return on Investment of Green Certified Homes

Once the initial investment of converting to a Green Home is paid back, any savings going forward (adjusted for inflation) provide a positive cash flow and return on your investment!

By lowering the total cost of ownership of these homes, they become even more affordable and attractive. This becomes particularly important for older members of the community who may depend on a fixed-income in their later years of life.

As an added benefit of the renovation process, all outdated but still usable products and building materials are easily removed and re-cycled through Community based Non-Profit Business's such as Habitat For Humanity.

"Healthiness" of Green Certified Homes

The health and comfort of a home's occupants is a primary goal of a Green Certified Home. Measures are taken to eliminate air intrusion (drafts), properly control humidity levels, and eliminate hot/cold spots within the home.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) can be affected by gases (including carbon monoxide, radon, volatile organic compounds), particulates, microbial contaminants (mold, bacteria) or any mass or energy stressor that can induce adverse health conditions.

Eliminating the source of these contaminants is key.

Competitive Advantage in the Real Estate Market

Green Certified Homes continue to demonstrate increased buyer interest, command higher new construction and resale values, and spend fewer days on the market compared to traditionally built structures. The Triangle has seen an increase in the sales penetration for Certified Homes every year, comprising over 35 percent of new construction in recent Quarterly statistics from the Triangle MLS. They spend much less time on the market, and can command a premium price.

Photo above shows Picardy Place remodeled kitchen and photo at the right shows kitchen as built in 1963.

These homes also offer additional unseen and under-appreciated value. They were built from lumber from slower-growth trees (denser and harder wood), and as such offer superior structural support compared to the same home built using lumber from today's faster-growing (softer and less-dense wood) trees.

Quality Assurance of Green Certified Homes – Verification to a Defined Standard

The National Green Building Standard (NGBS) is the preeminent residential green building rating system. It sets green baselines for all new residential construction, development, and remodeling projects.

The NGBS requires that a qualified, independent third-party inspect the project and verify that all green design or construction practices claimed by the builder toward green certification are incorporated correctly into the project. Most projects require at least two inspections. When you buy, remodel, or build a Green Certified Home that has been Certified using the NGBS, you can be assured that your home has been verified to conform to a defined set of Green Building Standards.

Article submitted by Jeff Wiblitzhouser, President of Paradise Found Construction.