

# master BUILDER

WINTER 2024

Building a Future of  
**SMART**  
Home Solutions

## In This Issue

15 “Smart” Retrofit Solutions

39 2024 Remodeled Homes Tour

44 Powering the Smart Home

# Master Builder Magazine is Getting Remodeled!

We're refurbishing to serve our members even better than ever!

For years, we've loved the look and feel of *Master Builder* magazine. We also recognize that, just as finishes of a beloved home lose their luster, our tried-and-true look and feel would benefit from reinvigorating refurbishment. So, rather than remain stir crazy with the status quo, we share with both bittersweet sentiment and creative enthusiasm that this issue of *Master Builder* will be the final edition in its current form.



The decision to renovate the magazine results from part of our strategic plan, which required us to evaluate our current communication tactics and to align our outreach strategies with the evolving communication channels and methods. As proud as we are of our award-winning magazine, it's time to reallocate resources to embrace fresher, more relevant and impactful methods, *in addition to the magazine*, to deliver valuable and timely content to our broadening audiences.

Nonetheless, some things must *not* change. Because MBAKS is the trusted voice of the homebuilding industry, the magazine must remain a trusted platform for knowledge sharing, inspiration, and connection. The magazine will be an *enhanced* reflection of our MBAKS community, and our shared purpose to make home happen.

## What's Changing?

Most notably three things:

- 1) More conspicuously than quarterly, the magazine will be published annually. (*Landing next fall.*)
- 2) This will not be your grandmother's news rag. That's so last year. Let your imagination run wild with bigger, shinier, more entertaining, and more poignant. If a magazine could have steroids, *Master Builder* will have had a lot of them. It'll be a magazine like none other. You won't want to miss it. More importantly, do not miss opportunities to be in it. (*Think advertisements. Think engagement with MBAKS' advocacy, stewardship, and events.*)
- 3) In addition to the magazine, we will increase our engagement and information dissemination through expanded digital channels, real-time updates on our website, and timely print materials and mailings. All this to enhance promotion of our belief that everybody deserves a place to call home, and our purpose is to make home happen.



## We Can't Wait to Show You!

To our readers, writers, advertisers, and partners—thank you for all you've done with and for *Master Builder* to date. Thanks in advance for your continued contributions. Together, we're going to produce the best periodical ever. Stay tuned. We can't wait to show you!

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## MBAKS BELIEF

Everyone deserves a place to call home.

# 2024 MBAKS Leadership

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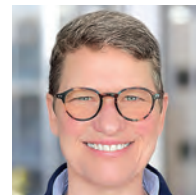
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The board comprises 15 voting members and the non-voting Executive Director, including a six-person executive committee, four appointed directors, and six directors elected or appointed at-large for two-year terms. Council chairs, elected to one-year positions, operate the association's member councils.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

# MBAKS Builds Community

MBAKS drives positive change in Puget Sound through tree planting initiatives and innovative housing solutions.

It's been a great year to serve as MBAKS President. We've accomplished so much, and we're ready to accomplish so much more. I have felt so honored to have served you and all members of this great association.

For over a century, our association has represented our industry and our communities by being a leading voice in advocating for housing solutions that serve everyone.

Of the values that guide our association, community is perhaps the closest to my heart. It's a big part of our work at Blackwood Homes, and a big reason why I wanted to serve as MBAKS president this year.

When we give back to the people we serve and places we live, we make the Puget Sound region a better place for everyone, including our neighbors. MBAKS is only as strong as the places we work in. And this year, we gave back in ways both new and impactful.

*Of the values that guide our association, community is perhaps the closest to my heart.*

One of the most exciting new initiatives is Planting a Better Tomorrow, an annual program for planting trees in local communities to improve our landscapes, air quality, and quality of life.

On October 5, MBAKS partnered with the City of Federal Way and community members to carry out our first planting at Steel Lake Park.

It was a huge success! We planted 75 trees, adding significant urban canopy to a community disproportionately affected by air pollution. It was a proud moment receiving praise from Federal Way Mayor, Jim Ferrell.

Another event that was incredibly inspiring to participate in was the ADU expo where MBAKS members—including Blackwood Builders—were able to show off their creations to the public as part of the 2024 Remodeled Homes Tour in September.

Hundreds of people toured ADUs and saw for themselves how this humble housing type can increase supply in our region without sacrificing quality in design or construction.

These two events were a fantastic way to close out a very special year. They exemplify what makes our association so great. We don't just build homes. We build solutions and forge community spirit in the place we live.

It has been inspiring to serve as your President. We could not have done so much without you. Thanks to you, the future looks bright.



BY **TREVOR JOHNSON**  
2024 PRESIDENT  
BLACKWOOD HOMES

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## MBAKS PURPOSE

To make home happen.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Building a Home for Membership

Working together to create a comfortable, secure, and healthy home for MBAKS.

Building a comfortable, secure, and healthy home is how you ensure the long-term happiness of the people who live there.

It's the same when you build an association. How do you make members feel at home? I'd like to share how the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties ensures that all members are comfortable, healthy, and secure.

**Comfort—fostering welcoming, friendly engagement:** Our association embodies a warm and welcoming spirit. We believe every member should feel comfortable and valued. From the moment you join, we strive to create enjoyable interactions with friendly events, accessible resources, and open communication. Our goal is to create an environment where you can share ideas, seek advice, and build lasting relationships with fellow passionate professionals.

**Security—fostering respect and aligning purpose:** MBAKS' security comes from being part of a respectful, purpose-driven community. We are united in our commitment to excellence, fostering trust and reliability. By upholding high standards of professionalism and ethics, we ensure everyone feels secure collaborating and sharing expertise. This mutual respect enables us to work together effectively, supporting each other to achieve our goals.

**Health—encouraging passionate and fun collaboration:** A healthy association thrives when members are engaged and energized. We are passionate about our work and infuse that enthusiasm into all activities. Through community engagement, collaborative projects, and social gatherings, we strive to make participation rewarding and enjoyable. We recognize that active involvement enhances well-being and leads to innovative ideas and successful outcomes for all.

**Building a community together:** Our association is more than a network—it's a community built on comfort, security, and health. By fostering a friendly, inclusive atmosphere, promoting respect and shared objectives, and encouraging passionate engagement, we create a space where all members thrive. We are dedicated to nurturing these values, ensuring you feel connected, supported, and inspired.

As we go forward, I invite you to contribute to MBAKS' vibrancy. Your enthusiasm makes our community special. Together, let's build an association that reflects the best of our industry and ourselves.

Thank you for being an integral part of the Master Builders Association. I look forward to sharing this journey with you.



BY **JERRY HALL**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
MBAKS  
JHALL@MBAKS.COM

*Our association is more than a network—it's a community built on comfort, security, and health.*

**CORE VALUES**  
BALANCE | DUTY | DETERMINATION

# Calendar of Events

Warm up your winter with MBAKS' packed calendar of networking events, industry breakfasts, and professional development opportunities.

## December

**25** MBAKS closed for the holidays until January 2, 2025

## January

- 2** SBC Breakfast
- 8** DBIC Breakfast
- 9** RBC Breakfast
- 16** Membership Collective
- 20** MBAKS closed for MLK Jr. Day
- 23** General Membership Networking

## February

- 5** DBIC Breakfast
- 6** Economic Forecast Breakfast
- 11** Hill Day
- 13** SBC Breakfast
- 13** RBC Breakfast
- 17** MBAKS closed for Presidents' Day
- 20** General Membership Networking

## March

- 5** DBIC Breakfast
- 6** SBC Breakfast
- 13** RBC Breakfast
- 20** General Membership Networking

**Event details are subject to change—visit [mbaks.com/events](https://mbaks.com/events) for the latest information and to register**





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# MBAKS Plants Seeds of Change in Federal Way



BY **CHARLENE LAM**  
COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP  
SPECIALIST  
MBAKS

“Planting a Better Tomorrow” initiative brings 75 trees to Steel Lake Park, addressing environmental challenges and fostering community well-being.

**O**n October 5, the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (MBAKS) held a transformative event at Steel Lake Park in collaboration with the City of Federal Way. The “Planting a Better Tomorrow” community stewardship program launched

plant trees that beautify the landscape and contribute significantly to the health and well-being of residents.

75 trees were planted at Steel Lake Park in just one day! They symbolize a collective commitment to a healthier,

environmental issues. The event was driven by a desire to address pressing environmental challenges, particularly in areas disproportionately affected by air pollution. A recent study from the Washington State Department of Ecology identified 16 communities statewide facing serious health risks, including reduced life expectancy and increased rates of respiratory issues such as asthma. Federal Way is one of these effected communities, making the need for immediate action clear.

*The future generations, that’s who we’re doing this for today.*

**JASON GERWEN**, City of Federal Way Parks & Facilities Deputy Director

this year as part of MBAKS’ ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship and community enhancement. This program aims to strategically

more sustainable future. The enthusiasm and dedication displayed by everyone involved highlight the power of community action in addressing





Trees offer a multitude of benefits that help mitigate these environmental health risks. They improve air quality, reduce urban heat retention, and enhance local biodiversity. By planting trees, MBACKS and our volunteers are enriching the environment, and contributing to the health and vitality of the community. This initiative aligns with MBACKS' belief that everyone deserves a place to call home, emphasizing that environmental health is fundamental to community well-being.

The event drew an enthusiastic group of volunteers, including residents, MBACKS members, and city officials, all eager to make a difference. Armed with shovels, gloves, and a shared commitment to change, volunteers worked together to plant a variety of trees that will flourish in Steel Lake Park for decades to come.

The trees planted at Steel Lake Park will serve as a living testament to the community's commitment to sustainability. Over time, these trees will

mature, provide shade, improve air quality, and enhance the park's beauty. The trees will provide gathering places for families and friends, creating a sense of civic belonging and identity. As these trees grow, they will contribute to the character of Federal Way and create a greener, more inviting space for residents and visitors alike.

The success of "Planting a Better Tomorrow" marks the beginning of MBACKS' ongoing efforts to improve community

health through environmental initiatives. With a clear understanding of the challenges faced by affected areas, the Association is committed to continuing its collaboration with local governments and communities to implement sustainable solutions. By planting trees today, MBACKS is sowing the seeds for a brighter, healthier tomorrow. This initiative aims to beautify the landscape and foster a resilient community in Federal Way for generations to come. 📌



**Join MBACKS in our mission to create healthier, more sustainable communities. Learn about upcoming environmental stewardship events at [mbaks.com/community](https://mbaks.com/community)**



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# The Healing Power of Music

BY CAPITAL BENEFIT SERVICES

How music can enhance mental health and well-being.

Music has the astonishing ability to reach deep into our souls and profoundly impact our mental health. Listening to just the right music when we need it can yield a multitude of benefits. Music may aid in coping with mental challenges, managing pain, and even mitigating memory loss.

Music therapy has emerged as a powerful tool in treating conditions such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and PTSD. Engaging in musical activities, whether through listening, playing instruments, or songwriting, can help individuals express and process their emotions, ultimately contributing to an improved mental state. The therapeutic nature of music has been shown to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression, providing a holistic approach to mental health treatment.

Additionally, music has been recognized for its role in managing pain and promoting relaxation. Studies have demonstrated that listening to soothing music can reduce the perception of pain, alleviate stress, and induce a state of relaxation. We recognize that not everyone's calm is the same; if Led Zeppelin soothes your soul, then by all means, lean on the Led. Ultimately, it is the way that music shapes our attention away from discomfort that makes it such a valuable tool for managing both acute and chronic issues.

One of the most profound effects of music on mental health is its potential to reduce memory loss and cognitive decline. Listening to familiar melodies and tunes has been

linked to triggering memories and emotions, especially in individuals with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Compared to control groups, those using music therapy typically see a greater improvement in cognitive functions than those receiving standard treatment alone (Bleibel et al. 2023). The

*Incorporating music into our lives can serve as a therapeutic and transformative force, nurturing our mental well-being and enriching our overall quality of life.*

rhythmic patterns and harmonies of music can stimulate areas of the brain associated with memory and cognition, providing a source of comfort and connection for those experiencing memory-related challenges.

So, what does music therapy look like and how can you start taking advantage of the benefits of music to improve your mental

health? First, start listening! Pick your favorite tunes, find playlists, and see what music puts you in a better mind state. You may find that your favorite music doesn't have as profound of an effect on your mental state. Follow the signs for music that puts you in a better mood. From there, you can

start to incorporate things like drawing, singing, dancing, drumming, and even viewing photos.

Incorporating music into our lives can serve as a therapeutic and transformative force, nurturing our mental well-being and enriching our overall quality of life. May you find harmony in your next melody. 🎧



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# GREEN DREAMS

The Art of High-Efficiency Comfort



BY JAMES SLONE  
WRITER

Sustainably built homes are undoubtedly good for the planet. But they're also good for the people who live in them. They're healthier, cozier, more energy-efficient, and built to last. But creating them requires deep knowledge, technical skill, and hard work. It's not easy being green.

I talked with two companies working in very different contexts—Seattle's remodeling experts Model Remodel and Tacoma's small home specialists Brett Marlo Design Build—to find out more about sustainable construction and what it means for the people living in their homes.

A main floor makeover  
from Model Remodel.

PHOTO: CINDY APPLE PHOTOGRAPHY

## In With the New—A Conversation with Model Remodel

Photos on this spread by Cindy Apple Photography

Since 2002, Model Remodel has remodeled and renovated hundreds of homes in projects that exemplify both form and function, winning numerous awards along the way. A long-standing member of MBACKS' Built Green program and the Northwest EcoBuilding Guild, they're a company dedicated to quality.

I recently sat down for a conversation with the Model Remodel Team to discuss the challenges of creating new, high-performance spaces in classic homes.

“Our work is a compromise of balancing how much we can address in terms of sustainability, performance, and general comfort within the limitations of the budget, especially when our scope is limited to only a portion of the house being renovated.”



This light and airy bathroom is part of a whole house remodel of a classic mid-century modern.

“For example, we may have a very well-sealed primary bedroom addition, but we are not necessarily replacing all the siding and windows of the home, or necessarily upgrading the systems of the home.”

### Air Sealing the Deal

So, what is the most important element of creating a healthier, more comfortable space? Model Remodel is emphatic: it's sealing.

“It's more important to interior comfort and energy efficiency than insulation. Most of the homes we work in are in Seattle—and a lot of these homes were built from 1915 to about 1960, post-war, with no plywood. We need to air-seal cavities.”

“The best way to do it is with sheeting comprised of individual boards of self-adhering WRB (Water Resistant Barriers). Beyond that we're addressing ceiling penetrations and insulation. We always treat small additions as new construction.”

Bridging those additions to the original home is complicated. The team explains, “If we're adding a kitchen, how do we transition it to the existing house without touching the classic exterior? We must consider the exact thickness of the walls and how to transition the roof because we often put out insulation on the top.”

### Air Supply

When it comes to energy efficient appliances, Model Remodel knows the real improvement comes with HVAC upgrades.

“If we're redoing an existing space like a basement and the HVAC system is more than ten years old, we need to talk seriously about HVAC appliances. High-efficiency mini splits are very popular. If the basement is accessible, we'll use Mitsubishi or Daikin heat pump units and air handlers.”

HVAC system updates aren't just important to clients; they're often needed to get permit approval. “It's more difficult to get permits with the new thermal requirements without switching to a mini-split or high efficiency variable refrigerant systems,” Model Remodel explains.





As you'd expect, setting up a new HVAC in an older home can be tricky. "Most of the time these systems are in basements. And if you're making a change to the system, you need to check on the ductwork to make sure that's sealed as well. But once we've remodeled, the load on these HVAC systems is much less especially with the air sealing and insulation."

It may be challenging, but you can really feel the results.

## External Affairs

I'm fascinated by the decisions that go into renovation projects. When pursuing high-efficiency upgrades, what do you change, and what do you keep the same? "That's a tough one," says Model Remodel. "We like to follow the building science and work from the outside: address weather and the water first, then air, then thermal."

"Sometimes we're limited in terms of what we can actually improve." For example, replacing old single-pane windows with more efficient ones can be problematic.

"When you have a very old home, its windows are usually single pane and framed in old wood." Replacing them would be ideal, but there's a catch.

*We like to follow the building science and work from the outside: address weather and the water first, then air, then thermal.*

**CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER, Model Remodel**

"The exterior cladding and the window are ideally one assembly. If you replace the windows without the siding, any issues caused by the siding may void the warranty on the windows." If Model Remodel is taking a more holistic approach and replacing all the windows, they recommend updating the entire exterior as well.

## Material World

At Model Remodel, efficiency isn't just about operations—it's about smart material choices too.

"We always source cabinets that are low VOCs. We don't deal with particle board material like MDF (medium-density fiberboard); we always use real wood or finger-jointed wood. We don't use OSB (oriented strand boards) unless we must. We typically use plywood just to keep our assemblies from all that glue and formaldehyde. We don't use any vinyl or any polyvinyl chloride systems in windows or floors to avoid off-gassing."

"It's not just about delivering a dream home wish list to the client. We're trying to make it better than what it was."

## The Bottom Line

There is a lot that goes into retrofitting an old home, but the most important thing is the seamless integration of retrofits into people's lives and a place's character. You're creating a modern space in an classic context. "The result is a better, more durable, and comfortable home. It's a lot more efficient. And the best part is that it looks like it's always been part of the neighborhood."



## Living With Intent—Brett Marlo Design Build

Photos on this spread by Brett Marlo



This petite backsplash doubles as a striking accent piece.

Tacoma-based Brett Marlo Design Build specializes in new high-performance houses and ADUs with a smaller footprint. I interviewed the company's Founder and Owner Brett Marlo to find out how she makes sure the homes they build are healthy, green, and comfortable.

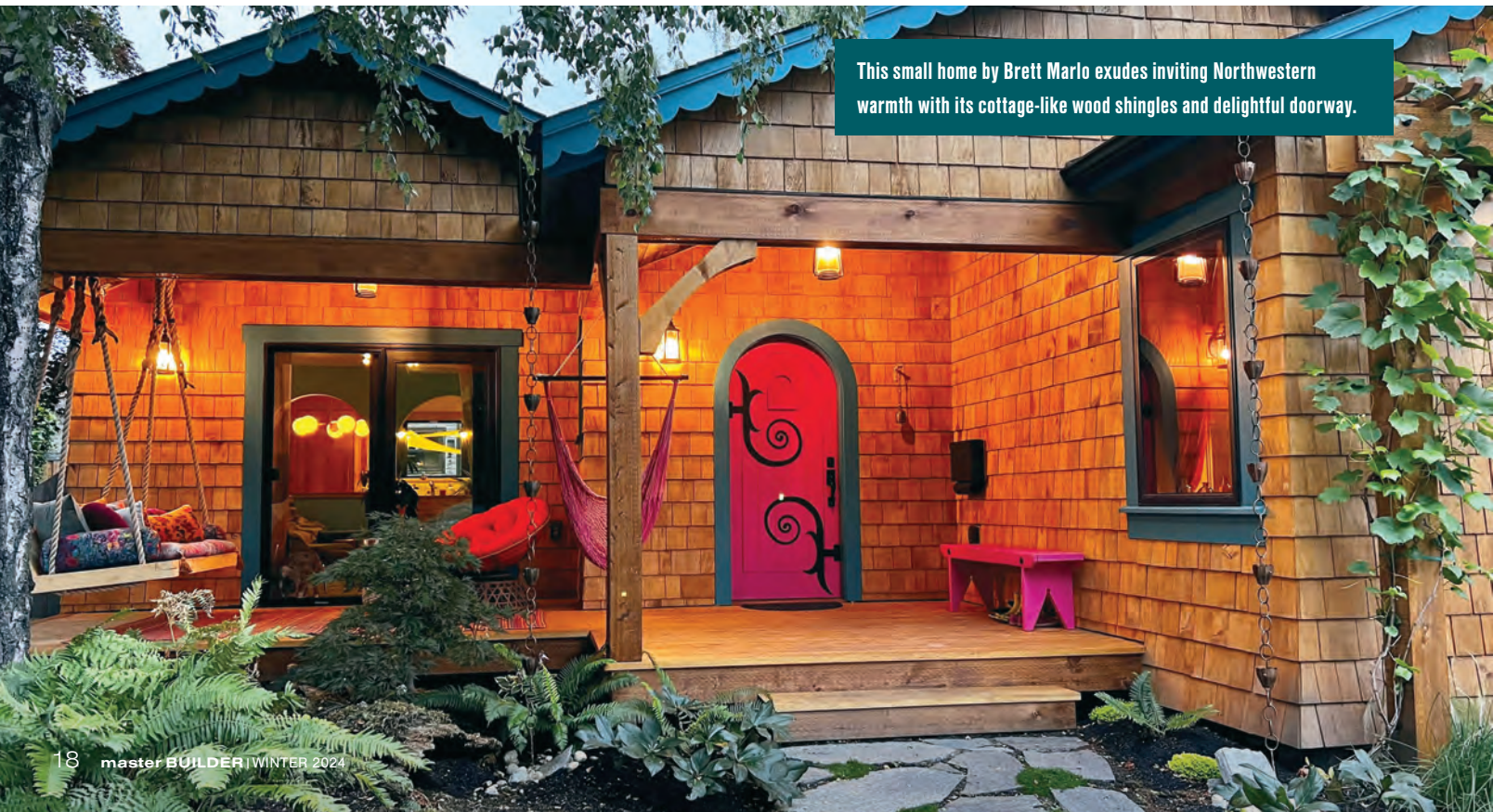
### Thoughtful Spaces

It all starts with a conversation—one that places the values of the residents at the forefront of the design. “Living intentionally,” says Brett, “involves thoughtful conversations where we think through our client’s current needs, potential future, and aging-in-place strategies together.”

Compact homes are their focus because they offer a lot of benefits in a small package. “Smaller homes require less of everything, even stress!” Why is that?

“They require fewer materials and therefore are less costly to build. They’re cheaper to heat and cool and therefore less costly to maintain. And let’s not forget, smaller spaces are so much easier to clean!”

How does design focused on aging in place contribute to creating a more comfortable, healthy space? Brett says it’s more about universal design than just aging in place.



This small home by Brett Marlo exudes inviting Northwestern warmth with its cottage-like wood shingles and delightful doorway.

Residents enjoying their cozy new kitchen.



*We believe intentional living requires less space inside, and more life outside.*

**BRETT MARLO**, Bret Marlo Design Build

“It’s also about inclusion, whether it’s you or family and guests staying with you. We all have times in our lives when we are injured and not fully able. Designing for these circumstances just makes sense. If designed well, you won’t even know that the concept was a driving force.”

But there’s more. “The other great thing about small footprint design is that you can design more than one unit per property.” Not only does this help address the housing shortage, but it also creates an income stream for the property owner.

## Deeply Rooted

Brett Marlo Design Build grew out of Brett Marlo Designs. “While sustainability was always at our core, we realized after a few years that we wanted a deeper level of green that design alone couldn’t address. To walk our talk, I moved into our first tiny house build, just 200 square feet, where I lived with my daughters and dog for over five years.”

After that she purchased a property in Tacoma with the dream of building more housing opportunities in 15-minute neighborhoods. “We believe intentional living requires less space inside, and more life outside.”

But what about life inside? It all starts with the building envelope and extends to every other aspect of the home.

“The good news,” says Brett, “is by meeting today’s energy codes, which are more stringent than those of the past, energy usage decreases. You can decrease it further with a tighter shell, better insulation, high efficiency windows, LED lighting and energy-

efficient water heaters. HVAC and appliances can drastically save energy usage.”

“Holistic design” is a term that gets thrown around a lot, but what does it actually mean?

Brett explains, “It’s when all systems are integrated to synergize with each other. From the start, we analyze the site to understand the best orientation and how the weather will affect the structure, taking advantage of natural lighting as well as shading. We try our best not to disturb the site and opt for the lowest-impact foundation systems.”

## Building Innovation

Smart home technology is an emerging part of the building process, and one the company has embraced. Says Brett thoughtfully, “We focus on healthy indoor air quality, and we may employ apps to manage heating, cooling, dehumidification, and recovery ventilators. We are always open to learning about new sustainable products and techniques as our industry grows more efficient.”

When it comes to materials, Brett is amazed by the sheer volume of choices. “We focus on great performing materials that are easy to maintain and eye-pleasing. When it comes to cost, it’s not a question of whether a product is green. You could easily spend more on an unsustainable product than on a healthy one.”

The result of all this attention to detail is a small house that truly feels like a home, a less stressful space that encourages big, intentional lifestyle choices. It’s a home that asks, why sweat the small stuff when you’re living life to the fullest? 🏡

# Leadership Through Empowerment and Connection



BY **KIMBERLEY MARTIN**  
2024 PWB CHAIR  
CYNEBURG  
SERVICES, INC.

Discover how the SEEN method—See, Empathize, Empower, and Navigate—can transform traditional leadership into meaningful connections that inspire teams to thrive.

In today's fast-paced world, effective leadership is more than just giving orders; it's about connecting, empowering, and inspiring teams to succeed together. After attending the annual PWB conference in October and listening to the presenting speaker, Morgan Burch, I understood more about why I considered some people to be great leaders.

Morgan Burch's SEEN method—See, Empathize, Empower, and Navigate—provides a framework for leaders to foster a workplace

*Incorporating the SEEN method into leadership practices cultivates an environment where every team member feels valued.*

culture that is inclusive, motivating, and adaptive. This method helps leaders move beyond traditional models to connect directly with their team members, ensuring that each person feels valued and engaged.

The first step in the SEEN method, "See," emphasizes truly seeing each team member as an individual. This means recognizing each person's unique strengths, skills, and aspirations. Leaders who "see" their team members understand that everyone brings something valuable to the table. By actively noticing contributions, listening attentively, and acknowledging unique perspectives, leaders create a space where team members feel respected. This step lays the groundwork for a connected, harmonious work environment where everyone feels like they belong.

The next pillar, "Empathize," involves understanding and sharing the feelings of others. Empathy is crucial in leadership, as it builds trust and open communication. Leaders who empathize are better equipped to address concerns, reduce conflicts, and support their teams through challenges. When team members feel understood on an emotional level, they're more loyal, motivated, and productive. Empathetic leaders are approachable and responsive, strengthening team morale and creating a supportive, collaborative culture.

"Empowerment" is the third stage in the SEEN method, focusing on providing team members with the tools, autonomy, and confidence to make decisions. Leaders who empower teams foster independence and creativity, helping individuals grow within their roles. By encouraging risk-taking, offering constructive feedback, and celebrating achievements, leaders make their team members feel capable and appreciated. Empowering leadership leads to an engaged workforce, where everyone feels competent and encouraged to contribute their best.

Finally, "Navigate" involves guiding the team through challenges and changes. Effective leaders provide direction and adapt their strategies to evolving circumstances. They help team members overcome obstacles by providing clarity, resources, and reassurance. A leader who navigates well builds resilience in their team and ensures stability, even in uncertain times.

Incorporating the SEEN method into leadership practices cultivates an environment where every team member feels valued, can foster meaningful connections, inspire dedication, and create lasting success within their teams.

I have loved being your 2024 PWB chair and can't wait to see where we go in the future. Please join PWB on our journey. 🏡

## Upcoming Events

### Council Offsites

Jan 28 | TBD

Feb 11 | TBD

Visit [mbaks.com/events](https://mbaks.com/events) for up-to-date information on the location and status of events

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# A Day of Empowerment and Growth

The 2024 PWB Conference brought together industry leaders and newcomers for a day of networking, learning, and inspiration.

The Professional Women in Building (PWB) Conference 2024 unfolded as a day of inspiration, learning, and networking at the picturesque Glendale Country Club. As attendees arrived, they were greeted by a beautifully arranged event space featuring elegant table arrangements and centerpieces. The day kicked off with tea, cold brew coffee, and a bustling sponsor area for

companies to showcase their products and services.

Luellen Smith, the national chair of PWB, officially opened the conference with an inclusive and warm address that emphasized the importance of collaboration and support within the industry. Her encouraging words set the stage for a day of empowerment and growth, reflecting the

conference's commitment to fostering a supportive community for women in the building sector.

The highlight of the conference was an enthusiastic keynote presentation by Morgan Burch. Her engaging and relatable speaking style captivated the audience, inspiring them to apply new ideas to their professional lives. Burch's presentation set an energetic tone for the day, providing attendees with valuable insights and strategies for success at



being SEEN at work, at home, and in the building industry.

Following the keynote and a short break, there was an expert panel discussion featuring industry veterans Elise Enriquez of Elise Enriquez Coaching & Consulting, Traci Tenhulzen of Tenhulzen Residential, and Kara Poysky from 1st Security Bank. These accomplished





professionals shared insights and strategies from their own careers, providing attendees with actionable advice for seizing opportunities in the building industry and how to tackle challenges they may face along the way. The diverse experiences represented on the panel offered a comprehensive view of the field, catering to both seasoned professionals and newcomers alike.

Throughout the day, ample networking opportunities allowed participants to forge new connections and strengthen existing relationships, creating a dynamic environment

for knowledge sharing and mentorship. This year's conference saw a notable increase in first-time attendees, underscoring the growing strength and influence of women in the building industry. As the event ended, it was clear that the PWB Conference had once again provided a vital platform for women to come together, learn from one another, and shape the future of their field.

Want to join the MBAKS chapter of the Professional Women in Building Council and attend great events like this one? Check out [mbaks.com/pwb](http://mbaks.com/pwb) for more information. 📌



Join the PWB at [mbaks.com/pwb](http://mbaks.com/pwb)



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# Leading the Conversation



BY **JENNIFER TENNYSON**  
2024 SMC CHAIR  
TENNYSON HOMES

*If you don't like what's being said, change the conversation.*

**DONALD DRAPER**, *Mad Men*

Thanks to TikTok, I have rediscovered the joy of one of the most acclaimed television series in recent history: *Mad Men*. It is an interesting juxtaposition: a 10-plus-year-old television series about the 1960s advertising heyday, now seen on the latest media platform targeting the youngest demographics.

Throughout *Mad Men*, viewers experience the youthquake and upheaval of the 1960s through the lens in and out of the advertising world adjusting (or not) to the myriad of changes within and beyond the characters' control. The buzz of the future perpetuates every consideration, decision, and action, promising a better life balanced with nostalgia of the past.

The "smart" home—featured first in *The Jetsons*, *Star Trek*, and general entertainment of the 1960s and 1970s—is hitting its stride, fulfilling the promise of meaningful experiences enhancing all aspects of living, today and into the future. Like the products and companies explored on *Mad Men*, the "smart" home needs our industry's storytellers to communicate the features and benefits of this improved way of living in relatable and understandable ways.

That's where the Sales & Marketing Council (SMC) comes in.

Our council's expert members lead discussions every day in a variety of ways, changing the conversation as needed as we provide an integral

component of homebuilding's foundation: marketing and selling homes, products, and services, as well as the "smart" technologies and principles which make better homes happen.

In the episode, "The Carousel," Don Draper pitches the concept of a revolutionary yet simple way of sharing photos and memories in what was then a revolutionary way: slides viewed via a projector so that they would advance with ease. Much like the "smart" home, the slide carousel was a simple improvement on an important aspect of life: enjoying home with loved ones. In Don Draper's words about the carousel, "It lets us travel the way a child travels. Around and around and back home again, to a place where we know we are loved."

SMC members communicate home to customers and builders every day—especially the "smart" home—to the people who matter most: everyone. Want to shape the future and help make home happen? Join SMC and bring the best of how we make better homes happen with our council and MBAKS. 📌

## Upcoming Events

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# Get Smart

BY **JAMES SLONE**  
WRITER

Smart Home Gadgets for Automating—  
and Optimizing—Your Domestic Life





**W**hen it comes to how we live in our homes, perhaps the most consequential development in the last few decades has been the rise of smart home technology. Whether you're trying to save energy, cutting costs, optimizing conveniences, indulging creature comforts, or securing the perimeter, there's a smart home solution for you.

### Electric Dreams

Since the 1950s, the fully automated home has been the dream of utopian builders pursuing the "home of the future", corporate suits boosting the latest tech, and interior designers pursuing domestic bliss with Jetsons-like conveniences.

Serious efforts to automate homes with digital tech proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s. But the need for hardwiring (versus wireless), closed networks, and the relative rarity of in-home personal computers kept automation a high-end and niche product.

With the emergence of the Web, wireless connectivity, voice recognition, and smart phones the dream of a truly smart home can finally be realized. Any homeowner of relatively modest means can centralize and automate their home, running all their devices from virtually anywhere with voice commands and apps 24 hours a day.

However not all smart home technology is created equal and there are many factors to consider when choosing to make your house a smart home. In that spirit, let's look at some of the top-rated platforms and devices.

### There's the Hub

The hub is the main user interface and central nervous system of the smart home, the one ring that rules all smart devices. These hubs help manage and automate your systems and devices with a controller, which can be anything from a dedicated touch screen to a voice-activated smart speaker to your phone. Hub software like Apple Home app and Google Home are also popular options that connect third party hardware to users' phones, tablets and personal computers. When adding smart technology to your home it is best to start with the hub.

Attractively designed and boasting fantastic sound, the Amazon Echo offers Bluetooth and wi-fi connectivity that can automate a slew of devices. Add Amazon Sidewalk, and you'll boost your network range while expending little energy. While it doesn't quite match the flexibility of the Echo, Google Nest's voice assist is

unmatched, making planning and scheduling as easy as speaking—built-in Google search makes knowledge seeking seamless with home control.

If you're looking for more control and customization, and don't mind a more involved setup, consider Home Assistant (Open Home Foundation). This open-source alternative offers both software and hardware solutions to add smart technology to your home.

## Blanket Security

For a lot of people, the thing that makes a home a home is safety and security. Here are a few smart home devices that will help you keep tabs on your home whether on the couch or out with friends.

TP-Link's Tapo C120 is your choice if you need high-res, motion-sensitive video from a camera smart enough to distinguish between types of movement and threat levels. Its wireless cameras are weather-resistant and can run for months on end before a recharge. It also automatically sends alerts as needed. If you want a deterrent in your camera by way of onboard spotlight, check out the Arlo Pro 5S.

## Let There Be Light

Smart light bulbs are long-lasting, consume far less energy than typical incandescent bulbs, and with voice control, incredibly convenient to use.

The Smart Bulb SE Color (Roku) bulb is relatively cheap for a product that offers 16 million colors and a wide band of light temperatures (from a hot 1,900K to a cool 6,500K). Controlled via Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa, these bulbs can illuminate a task or set the mood with atmospheric lighting on the fly with a voice command. If you want voice-controlled LED bulbs that come with wi-fi signal boosters, security cameras, speakers, and a host of other built-in devices, Sengled LED bulbs are for you. Use their app on your phone to monitor energy use.

Want smart lighting without the hub? Try WiZ's 60W A19 Color LED bulbs.

## More Temperate Climes

Perhaps the smartest reason for investing in a smart home system is energy-efficiency. The upfront costs are vastly outweighed by the potential savings of automating your thermostat. Here are a few devices that will change the way you set—and think about—temperatures in your home.





*For a lot of people, the thing that makes a home a home is safety and security.*

The Ecobee Smart Thermostat Premium is not only accessible from anywhere, but it also comes equipped with remote sensors that can be placed anywhere in your home to gauge temperatures and humidity levels and adjust accordingly to ensure consistency. Aside from offering direct, remote control, the Google Nest Learning Thermostat can easily be set to Home or Away modes to achieve a comfortable temperature when needed and turn it off when it isn't, saving energy in a big way. It can also learn from your habits and make anticipated changes on its own.

When it comes to more passive forms of energy efficiency, we should not underrate the role shades and blinds play in regulating solar radiation and indoor air temperature. One way to stay ahead of the sun is automation. Lutron Serena Smart Roller Shades adjust automatically based on your own preferences for light and shade, and even better, are built to last and quiet as a purr.

## Fresh Air

While it's not as hyped as high-tech security systems, indoor air quality is arguably the most essential predictor of domestic health and safety. Thankfully, there are smart home systems that can monitor HVAC performance, filter your air, and keep humidity levels in check.

SmartAC is like a crystal ball for seeing what's going on in your HVAC system in real time, whether checking airflow, tracking the condition of the filter, or keeping an eye out for leaks and related catastrophes. Not only that; it also collates all the intelligence it's gathered to make repair recommendations. The Filtrete Smart-Air Purifier is an absolute machine when it comes to intercepting harmful particles with HEPA-grade filtration. Thanks to its app, you will receive reports on air quality and recommendations for improving it.

If you're concerned about humidity levels, the Tapo T310 Smart Temperature and Humidity Sensor can see where it's elevated and put a humidifier to work.

## Plug and Play

Smart plugs and outlets are a cheap way to control appliances and devices from anywhere, whether it's toggling their power to cut down on energy vampirism or automating their functions. They provide a way to transform mere devices and appliances into smart ones.

The TP-Link Kasa Smart Wi-Fi Plug Slim is fully programmable, allowing you to power up or automate anything plugged into it, and conveniently monitors and reports on how much energy each device is using. While you can use Google Home to control it on the fly, its app also allows you to schedule on and off periods. Need to take it outside? There is a durable outdoor version. If you want cheap and easy, the no-frills wall insert smart plug Geeni Current+Charge comes with two USB ports and an app, giving you control over who has the power without any extraneous features.

## Food for Thought

Thanks to smart home technology, home chefs, foodies, and busy parents alike can make their lives easier. These devices can check your recipes, complete cooking tasks, and learn from experience. The sheer range of products is a little nuts: sous vide cookers, coffee makers, icemakers, instant pots, outdoor grills, ovens, thermometers, air fryers, wine fridges, and even temp-controlled mugs.

There are too many to exhaustively cover, but here are just a few. The Anova Precision Oven cuts a low-profile on your countertop while providing a combination cooking experience using both

steam and convection heating to slow cook food to perfect and consistent temperatures. Need to bake a cake, steam veggies, or roast a side of beef? It's got you covered.

Perhaps the most prosaically annoying part of cooking is having to take food out of the oven to check the temperature and guesstimating completion time using an imprecise thermometer. Meet the Meater+, a smart thermometer that goes into the oven with the dish and measures both ambient and internal temperature, then uses its readings to give you updates on cooking time and pings you when it's complete. Stick it in, walk away, and it does the rest.

## Best of the Rest

Need a robot vacuum cleaner that “knows” what it's doing? Check out the Eufy Clean G30 Verge robovac. Instead of just sensing its way around the contours of a room, this modestly priced household helper is wi-fi connected and maps every nook and cranny in your home, sending updates as needed.

Smart locks, like Google's Nest x Yale transports the simple act of locking and unlocking your front door into the 21st century—no key required. Employing a simple, changeable pin, you can unlock it with a few button presses, let guests in remotely, and change as needed with Google's Nest Connect.

*Whatever you can think of—cleaning, water usage, outdoor maintenance, entertainment options, or garage doors—there are smart home solutions.*



This has been a brief survey of the types of smart devices out there, and we're just skimming the surface. There are so many more devices covering just about every aspect of household management. Whatever you can think of—cleaning, water usage, outdoor maintenance, entertainment options, or garage doors—there are smart home solutions.

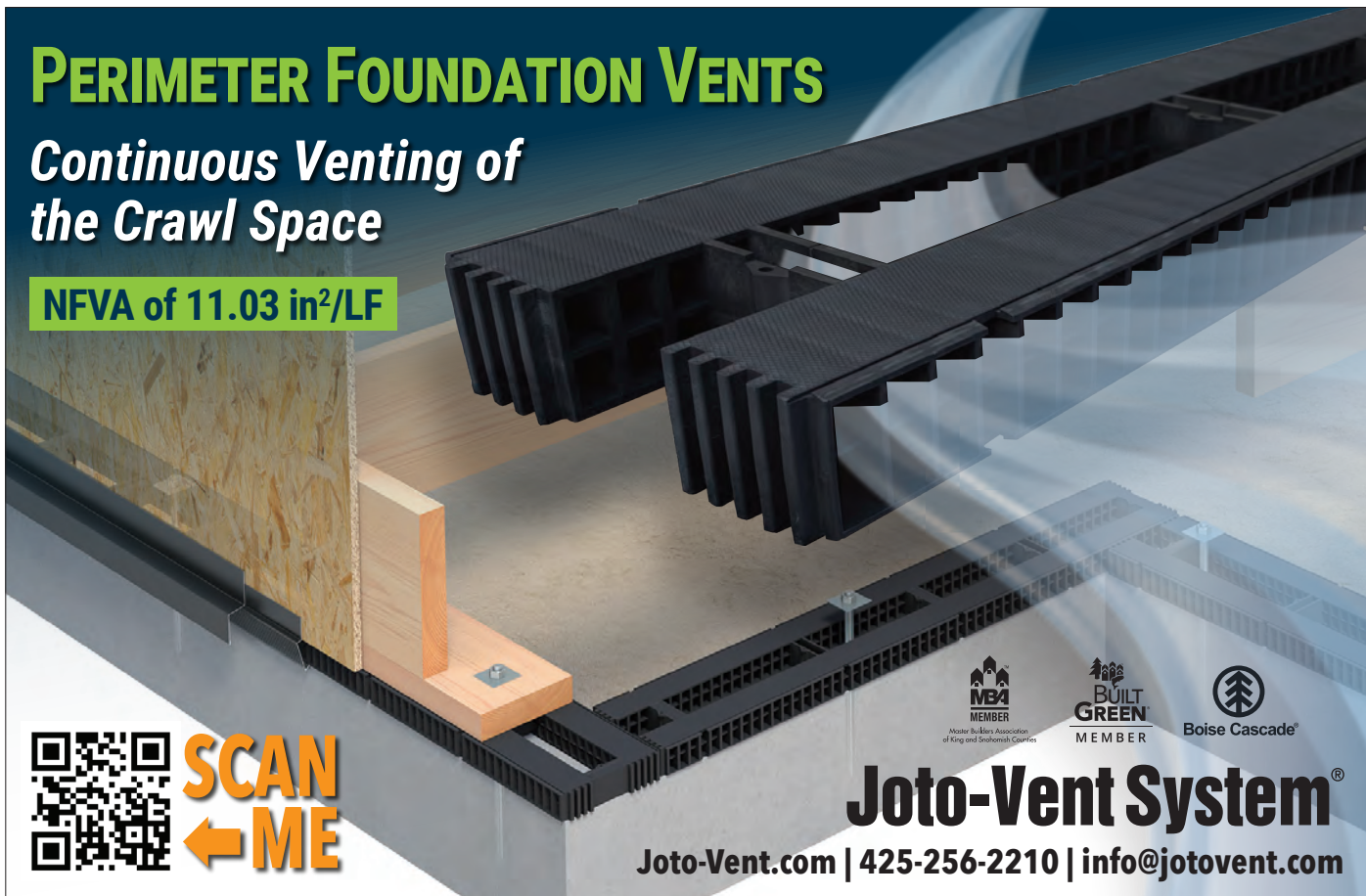
With such a wide range of smart home technologies available today, you can create a personalized ecosystem that makes your home more efficient, comfortable, and convenient. 🏠



# PERIMETER FOUNDATION VENTS

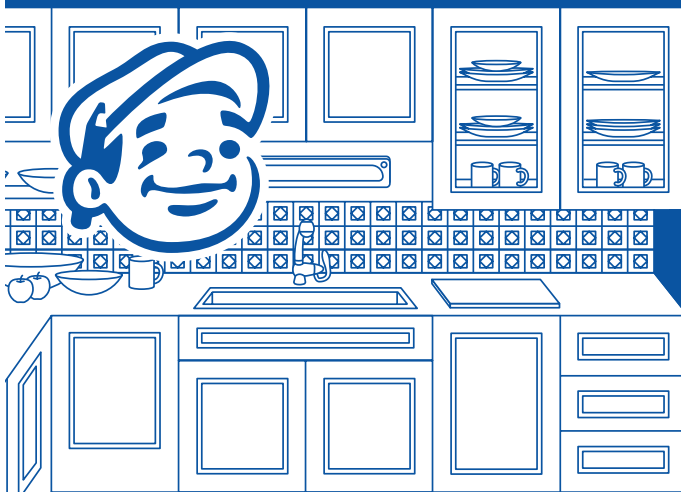
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# GRIP 2024 Highlights

BY **KIM MURPHY**  
ERNWEST

2024 was another incredible year to be a member of GRIP.

Here are the highlights!

## GRIP Members Kept More of Their Money

- \$55 Million Returned to Members over the last 3 adjustments.
- 19% Reduction in Premium Paid to L&I compared to base rates.
- Lower Program Costs so participants keep more of their refund dollars.
- \$99 Participation Fee keeping it cost effective to join.

## The GRIP Program Was Recognized for Two National Awards

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has recognized what we already know—that GRIP has the best service and support of any retro group out there. That is why our members stay with us year after year.

- State or Local Association Safety Program of the Year—for efforts to successfully advance safety in the industry by implementing our GRIP on Safety Excellence Awards.
- Best Service to Members—for outstanding association management.

## \$7.5 Million was Reimbursed to GRIP Members Through the SAW + GRIP Match

This program gets even better starting January 1st, 2025, Labor and Industries will increase their reimbursements.

- Now L&I will reimburse 50 % of base wages up to \$25,000 and GRIP will match the first \$10,000 so you could get a total of \$35,000 for bringing workers back to modified duty work\*. This program was designed for GRIP participants and only offered by MBAKS.

## The GRIP on Safety Excellence Awards is in its Third Year

This award is designed to recognize and promote GRIP members who have exceptional safety programs. Go beyond recognition and get these additional benefits:

- Reduction of regulatory compliance exposure
- Lower workers comp insurance costs
- Proactive way to mitigate risk
- Increase competitive advantage
- Improve employee morale

Interested in applying? Applications open April 1—August 31 each year. Go to [mbaGRIP.com/safety](http://mbaGRIP.com/safety) for more details. 📌

**Now is a great time to be a part of GRIP,  
go to [mbagrip.com](http://mbagrip.com) or call 844.MBA.GRIP to get started**

\*L&I reimburses base wages for up to 120 working days or \$25,000 per claim GRIP reimburses base wages for up to 66 days or \$10,000 per claim.

## Upcoming Events

### Getting Your GRIP on Claims, Comp, and Safety

Jan 9 | 11 a.m.

Feb 6 | 11 a.m.

Mar 6 | 11 a.m.

Virtual

### OSHA 300 Recordkeeping Electronic Reporting

Jan 9 | 11 a.m.

Virtual & MBAKS Bellevue

### Claim Cost Impact on Retro Refund

Feb 6 | 11 a.m.

Virtual

### Ladder Safety Awareness Training

Mar 3 | 1 p.m.

Virtual

Visit [mbaks.com/events](http://mbaks.com/events) for up-to-date information on the location and status of events



# The 3BLC Story TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Photos by Emily Keeney

BY **JAMES SLONE**  
WRITER



**Prairie-style Townhouse:** 3BLC updated and upgraded this angular, tightly packed 1979 townhouse, creating a functional, flowing kitchen with modern amenities without sacrificing rich period details.

Seattle-based Triple Bottom Line Construction (3BLC) is a builder with purpose, and it's right there in their name. They don't just build and remodel high-quality homes. They've based their entire business model on the triple bottom line: balancing people, planet, and prosperity.

3BLC seeks to have a positive impact on the communities they work in and on the planet we all live on. They take on climate change, promote social equality, and inspire others to do the same—all while running a prosperous business. Many homebuilders follow triple bottom line principles. Very few place it front and center.

So how does one build a profitable business around a bigger ideal? I recently sat down to talk to the company's founders, Wayne Apostolik, Miles Ford, and Ryan Lurie to find out.

## Origin Story

"It started with a conversation," says Ryan.

"The three of us worked together at a construction company and discovered that we were all into green, sustainable homebuilding. Every company I had been involved with for over 20 years always followed the normal trajectory: you rise to a point and then plateau. I wanted a business with longevity."

*What we try to understand early on when we meet a client is what they care most about. We try to align their interests with our expertise.*

**RYAN LURIE**, Co-Founder/Owner

The secret ingredient is passion for the work. As Miles puts it, “You can be prosperous and earn a living and still care about the environment and communities and the people you work with and people you impacted.” The founders took inspiration from books like “Let My People Go Surfing” by Patagonia founder, Yvon Chouinard that highlight the triple bottom line approach to business.

They would start by utilizing a co-op model to bake equity and fairness into the very structure of the company. It’s been an evolutionary process. “There’s the ideal,” explains Wayne, “but when you actually create a real business around that it evolves into something deeper.”

“Very early on,” Ryan explains, “we’d ask ourselves questions about how we can act on social equity, and we still have conversations on what it means. We have regular monthly meetings as a company and regular owners’ meetings where we all get together to engage these topics.”

## Prosperity

Merging an ideal vision with the reality of running a business is challenging but ultimately rewarding. “We wanted to build in the most environmentally responsible way we could,” Miles tells me. “But when you’re starting from scratch, you can’t pick and choose the green projects.” They knew that the business would have to be profitable first.

Early growth created a sturdy foundation for taking on more green building projects. And as they’ve grown, says Miles, “[they’re] building a team of really solid people we care about, and who care about the work they’re doing.”

3BLC is not trying to solve every environmental or social problem, but instead creating a model for others to follow. “As a small company, we can’t end social inequity, we can’t solve climate change. But we can contribute and can demonstrate how we’re addressing these challenges on a small scale.”

Importantly, says Wayne, their efforts are not siloed. “We network with others that have similar thought processes in the Northwest. We’ve learned a lot from networking with others who are trying to go down this same road.”



**Capitol Hill Historic Home:** This spectacular bathroom is part of a full interior renovation of a landmarked home, which included FSC-certified wood and new energy-efficient windows.

When it comes to construction, 3BLC works very closely and transparently with clients, keeping them informed of every step of a given project.

They start by giving clients a high-level description of their process as outlined on their website, taking them through the initial phone call, site visit, and site meeting. They provide a good faith estimate on cost before pre-construction services begin and work quickly to get a scope and budget in place. Then onto a construction contract, completion, warranty period, and closeout.

Ryan says, “What we try to understand early on when we meet a client is what they care most about. We try to align their interests with our expertise.” Miles adds, “We offer a five-year warranty, which is rare in the industry, because we’re confident in the quality of the work we do.”

They complete around 20 projects in a year, including numerous ADUs, though the number waxes and wanes as projects have increased in scope. In any case, they’re staying busy. “At any one time we’re doing about three to five whole house remodels slash new construction.”

## People

Being a co-op means being employee-owned. But it’s not as easy as it sounds. It requires dedicated management and many people working together cohesively toward a common goal.

3BLC invests time in creating decision trees defining actions that need to be taken by the executive team out of necessity and ones

that need to be run by the owners. While the executive team chooses projects, they have monthly conversations with the larger team to get their feedback.

“Ownership sets the direction,” says Miles. “They set the course, they set the policies, and then it’s on the executive team to perform against that. It’s accountable to ownership. And anyone within the company can become an owner.”

And how does that work? “We ask an open question of every employee,” Ryan tells me. “Do you have an idea of how to make the company better? Not only are suggestions welcome, but if you really have the initiative and drive to carry on, there’s a pathway to ownership for you.”

“For us, it’s one person, one vote. We want you to be an active, contributing owner. It isn’t an easy path to walk, especially as co-op companies grow. So, it’s kind of an experiment.” The effect is more engagement from employees.

It’s not just about people inside the company. With a deep interest in the communities where they work, 3BLC donates significantly to national and local nonprofits focused on environmental and equity issues.

“When we started,” says Ryan, “we really relied on 1% for the Planet to guide our decision on who to partner with. Ecotrust is great, and they do a lot of stuff in the Pacific Northwest and as people they’re inspiring. We also work with Bike Works out of Columbia City.” As of 2023, 3BLC has donated over \$120,000 to 1% for the Planet.

Most of that is general operating support, says Miles. “We never put any kind of caveat on the donations we give.” And it’s not a one-way street. They get as much from their partners as they give.

“Working with nonprofits is an evolving priority for us” Ryan observes. “The more business we generate the more active we can become. We have a Director of Equity and Engagement focused on community outreach as part of our board.” Their hope is to offer more in-kind services that draw on their carpentry expertise.

## Planet

When it comes to building greener homes, 3BLC endeavors to follow new building science as it emerges to ensure that their projects utilize the latest strategies, technologies, and materials.

“We participate in PHIUS [for passive home construction] and Built Green,” explains Ryan. “All our new carpenters are paid to complete a passive house building course—probably one of the most comprehensive curriculums for green, energy-efficient building. We also have an annual education stipend we encourage them to take advantage of.”

“We try to loop people in when there’s interesting course offerings or seminars or conferences that might be worthwhile,” says Miles. “We have certified passive house consultants on staff as well, so there are people driving that conversation.”



This Egyptian-themed fire place, mantel, and mirror form the gorgeous centerpiece of this Capitol Hill classic.

*As a small company, we can't end social inequity, we can't solve climate change. But we can contribute and can demonstrate how we're addressing these challenges on a small scale.*

**MILES FORD**, Co-Founder/ Owner

3BLC's founders also draw on their experience building in other countries.

Miles moved to the US from the UK 14 years ago. "I worked for an architectural practice building green schools. That opened my eyes to modular construction, something we're exploring more in the US. I worked with cross-laminated timber and seeing that over here now is great."

Ryan spent a few years building in France. "Just seeing how European windows are installed, a different way to build, is very helpful. It keeps you from falling into the trap of thinking just because it's done this way, it's the only way possible. It opens your eyes to different ways of doing things."

When it comes to clients, it's about encouraging them to make good decisions whether their home is fully certified or not. We're trying to build the most environmentally sound projects we can."

Essential to creating that feeling of home comfort is the choice of materials. Ryan says that 3BLC works closely with trusted suppliers whose products "tick the right boxes: is it healthy, is it local, do we know the GWP [global warming potential]? We use EC3 calculators from the Carbon Leadership Forum to assess materials such as low-carbon concrete." Ultimately, it comes down to comfort, resiliency, and durability.

"For the size projects we do," he continues, "our biggest impacts are going to be wood, insulation and concrete. We also have recycled steel, but it's not very prevalent in the size homes that we do."

"When clients move into one of their homes," Ryan beams, "the biggest thing that they discover is it's more comfortable. They're always amazed at their energy bills." "Personally," Wayne opines, "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. You know once you've experienced it."



The stunning master bedroom in the Capitol Hill historic home.

## Perspective

Through careful planning, collaborative decision-making, and unwavering commitment to their values, 3BLC demonstrates what's possible in modern construction. Each project advances their understanding of sustainable building practices while strengthening community relationships.

"Our vision statement says it best," says Ryan, "we're trying to build the world we want to live in. Which means we want to build in a way that is responsible and respectful of the environment, and which strengthens relationships and community."

If what they're doing is an experiment, so far it's getting results. While 3BLC may not solve every environmental or social challenge, they're proving that a construction company can successfully balance purpose with profitability, one project at a time. 📌

## Leading the Way on Built Green Remodels

3BLC is one of the first two Built Green members to be certified under the brand-new Built Green Remodel Checklist for their Hammond project. Unlike the established single-family or multifamily checklists targeting new construction, this certification was developed for projects that improve performance, function, and comfort in an already existing space or entire house without radical alterations to the original structure. Built Green congratulates 3BLC for their superlative work.

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# Remodeled HOMES TOUR FEATURING ADUS



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Sammamish Luxe Family Gathering Space  
Nip Tuck Remodeling

## Tiny Homes, Big Impact

The best and brightest in remodeling excellence shared the incredible craftsmanship of the RC Council.

The Remodeled Homes Tour (RHT) was a resounding success this year, with 13 participating member companies and over 1,200 registered guests in attendance. The tour featured 15 locations dotted across King and Snohomish counties, offering attendees a wide variety of homes to explore. This year was unique as for the first time ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units) and DADUs (Detached Accessory Dwelling Units) joined the tour in addition to remodeled homes. Their inclusion is in line with MBAKS' support for expanding middle housing options in the region, and the tour was a great opportunity to



ADU/DADU



REMOLDELED HOME

showcase these increasingly popular housing options to the public. Over half of the locations on the tour this year featured ADUs/DADUs!

RHT is an excellent opportunity for people in the community to meet builders and remodelers who specialize in a wide range of cosmetic and structural upgrades to area homes. By donning a pair of blue fabric shoe coverings, guests on the tour could explore inside, talk to the builders, and be inspired on how to update their own spaces. Many tour locations included booths and other displays as part of the experience to help guests learn more about all the hard work and expertise the remodelers and builders put into these projects. Business representatives were on hand to answer questions



North East Chic  
Sockeye Homes



Charmed in North Seattle  
Carlisle Classic Homes

*My wife and I were able to tour five of the houses/ADUs on the Master Builder's tour on Sept 21. We just completed an ADU of our own, so it was wonderful to see what others have built.*

**KENT HARGRAVE**



Fairview Transformation  
Gaspar's Construction



Sanctuary in Magnolia  
Harjo Construction





North Seattle Sleek  
Blackwood Homes

*The ADUs were all very well built. The furnishings gave us many wonderful ideas. We are about to start a remodel on our main bath in our house and it great to see what others had done. We will be implementing some of the features we saw.*

**KENT HARGRAVE**



Backyard Cottage in Queen Anne  
Schulte Design Build



Ballard Dreaming  
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Hollywood Manor  
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Refined in North Delridge  
Newport West LLC



**ADU/DADU**



**REMODELLED HOME**

and show guests unique features they might have missed. From custom ranges to rebuilt facades and walkways, these projects had something for everyone.

This year's tour marks a milestone in the evolution of housing options, as well as a return to form by hosting in-person tours instead of virtual only. MBACKS and our Remodelers Council

are proud to bring together builders, remodelers, and members of the community to experience these incredible homes and ADUs/DADUs that are adding texture and character to neighborhoods across our region. We invite you to browse this year's projects at [remodeldtour.com](http://remodeldtour.com) and get in touch with the builders/remodelers if you have any questions or want to start something new. See you next year! ▲



Seward Park Retreat  
**Carlisle Classic Homes**



Interlake Delight  
**Irons Brothers Construction**



Family Living in West Seattle  
**Mighty House Construction**

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Cozy in Marysville  
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ADU/DADU



REMOLDELED HOME

# “Smart” Business Practices for Success



BY **COLBY GOODMAN**  
DIRECTOR, MEMBERSHIP  
GROWTH & EXPERIENCE  
MBAKS

In today's fast-paced marketplace, savvy business owners are discovering that adopting “smart” business practices is not just beneficial, but essential for long-term success. As your company evolves and consumer expectations rise, implementing innovative strategies can set you apart from the competition. Here are the top five practices that can make your business smarter:

## 1. Embrace Technology

One of the cornerstones of success is technology—from cloud computing to AI-driven processes, the right tools can transform your operations. Automating routine tasks frees up time and resources, allowing you to focus on what you do best: running your business. Businesses that harness technology effectively are more capable of withstanding unexpected changes in the market, giving them a competitive edge.

## 2. Focus on Client Experience

Today's clients demand more than just quality products; they expect an exceptional experience when interacting with your product or service. Collecting feedback can provide valuable insights into their preferences and any pain points in your system. By tailoring products and services to meet these needs, you will boost satisfaction and generate loyalty. A happy client is a repeat client, and word-of-mouth referrals can be invaluable.

## 3. Foster Positive Workplace Culture

The backbone of any successful business is its workforce. Creating a positive internal culture is crucial for motivation and productivity. Encouraging open communication, offering professional development opportunities to employees, and recognizing individual

and group achievements can significantly boost morale. A thriving company culture not only attracts top talent but also reduces turnover, ultimately benefiting the bottom line.

## 4. Make Data-driven Decisions

Data is king, and making informed decisions based on that data is crucial. By leveraging data analytics and setting obtainable key performance indicators (KPIs) businesses can gain insights into market trends and client behaviors, allowing for swift and effective business adaptations. This data-driven approach minimizes risk and enhances overall agility.

## 5. Build Strong Networks

Collaboration can be a game-changer. Forming strong partnerships and networking with other businesses opens doors to unique solutions and expanded reach. These

relationships can lead to new opportunities and resources that propel growth.

“Smart” business practices are about more than just profitability—they're about creating a responsive, efficient, and robust organization. By embracing technology, prioritizing customer experience, and fostering a positive culture, businesses can survive and thrive in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The future belongs to those who are ready to innovate and adapt. 📈

## Upcoming Events

### Membership Networking

**Jan 23** | 4-6 p.m.

**Feb 20** | 4-6 p.m.

**Mar 20** | 4-6 p.m.

MBAKS Bellevue

Visit [mbaks.com/events](https://mbaks.com/events) for up-to-date information on the location and status of events

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# Powering the Smart Home



BY **PARKER DAWSON**  
SEATTLE GOVERNMENT  
AFFAIRS MANAGER  
MBAKS

Smart panels are set to revolutionize home energy management for consumers and builders.

Smart devices and appliances are becoming a permanent fixture of the modern American household, and the concept of the smart home is clearly trending. Tools like home security systems, Bluetooth connected thermostats, and interactive home speakers have become must-have quality of life items for many families. But each of these smart devices demands power.

According to a 2024 update to the Northwest Regional Forecast Project, electricity demand in the PNW could

increase by as much as 30% over the next decade. The modernization of local power grids is underway, and fortunately technological advances are creating better—and smarter—solutions to meet the expectations of future homeowners and needs of municipalities: enter smart panels.

Smart panels are digitally monitored electrical distribution boards that connect to the internet and manage a home’s energy allocation and overall consumption. Offering high

levels of control over system settings and the ability to monitor energy usage with real-time fine-grained reporting, smart panels represent a significant leap forward in home energy efficiency, cost savings, and system safety.

For the individual consumer, smart panels can be used to lower utility costs by balancing and spreading energy consumption across the full range of electric products in a home throughout the day—from garden lights to EV charging. For municipalities,



smart panels could theoretically protect entire grids from over-drawing during typical hours of peak consumption.

Harnessing the information and control offered by smart panels systemwide is no small task. Local utilities must consider how to provide effective user privacy and user-override protections. These guardrails are essential for building consumer trust in the technology and for ensuring that smart panels are leveraged by verified users and organizations.

Only a handful of cities across the United States are considering the use of smart panels as an embedded development tool. Fortunately, Seattle is one of them. Though data in this field is relatively nascent, Seattle City Light is actively exploring opportunities to introduce smart panels as a tool for homebuilders. This research could help create better electrical system integration, meet density goals, and drive down electrification costs. Seattle's case study is likely to influence the state legislature as well, giving homeowners across Washington another opportunity to make homes even smarter. 🏡



# AHC Continues Success at the Ballot Box



BY **MIKE PATTISON**  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
COUNCIL MANAGER  
MBAKS

The 2024 General Election saw the Affordable Housing Council (AHC) continue its winning ways at the polls. While the AHC does not participate in federal races, the 2024 election was important for state legislative races and a handful of local seats. Of the 22 contests participated in, our organization secured 20 outright wins, one loss, and a final race too close to call as of this writing.

Democrats continue to hold strong majorities in both state legislative chambers. MBAKS advocacy efforts will be crucial as over one-half of the state legislature is entirely or partially covered by King and Snohomish Counties. 2024 election results did little to change the philosophical makeup of the legislature.

MBAKS staff and engaged members have been actively involved with state legislators throughout the summer and fall. While the next legislative session does not start until January, it is never too early to begin conversations about bills that will affect housing.

For the work that the AHC does, 2025 will be one of our most important years in recent memory. Multiple seats on both the King and Snohomish County councils will be up for election, as will the King County Executive.

Each city in both counties covered by MBAKS will have multiple council positions up for grabs, as well as many important mayoral seats. The AHC gets to work early in the year evaluating over 100 candidates for office and entertaining endorsement decisions. With local implementation of middle housing, accessory dwelling unit law, and our ongoing commitment to faster permit processing, 2025 is critical for housing. 📌

Support housing-friendly choices  
at [mbaks.com/ahc](https://mbaks.com/ahc)



## Thank You to Our Hammer Club

By contributing to the Affordable Housing Council, Hammer Club donors help bring more pro-housing voices to the state capital and city halls.

### PLATINUM

**Darin Huseby**, Huseby Homes  
**Gary Petershagen**, Construction Draw & Development Inspection Services  
**Marty Robinett**  
**Gary Young**

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**Aaron Hollingbery**, Toll Brothers  
**Lynn Eshleman**  
**John Mirante**, Terrene Ventures

### SILVER

**Doug Barnes**, Resource Transition Consultants  
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### BRONZE

**Brian Holtzclaw**  
**Duana Kolouskova**, JMMK Law

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# Permit Activity—New Residential Construction

YTD through September 30, 2024 compared to same period in 2023.



## Single-Family Units

AREA	2023	2024	% Change
King County	1,613	1,830	13%
Snohomish County	1,481	1,966	28%
Pierce County	1,316	1,339	2%
TOTAL	4,410	5,135	15%



## Multifamily Units

AREA	2023	2024	% Change
King County	6,227	5,527	12%
Snohomish County	975	1,239	24%
Pierce County	1,255	686	-58%
TOTAL	8,457	7,452	-12%



Data courtesy of [socds.huduser.gov](https://socds.huduser.gov). For more detailed permit information containing the most up to date numbers, see our friends at [constructionmonitor.com](https://constructionmonitor.com)  
Note: Preliminary data for 2024 is subject to monthly revision.



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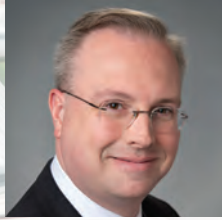
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# Innovation for Home Building: The Productivity Challenge



**BY ROBERT DIETZ, PH.D.**  
CHIEF ECONOMIST  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF HOME BUILDERS  
@DIETZ\_ECON

Rising regulations have slowed construction productivity growth, hampering the industry's ability to meet America's housing needs.

**T**he housing market's most significant feature is its persistent structural deficit. Estimates vary, but when comparing the size and composition of the population and the makeup of the current housing stock, the housing market is short approximately 1.5 million homes per NAHB analysis.

Expanding housing supply means not only building new single-family homes and apartments, but also reinvesting in existing homes to make them more energy efficient, resilient, and smart. Market forces expanding supply and improving the stock is the best way to achieve this goal, rather than ineffective government policies that mandate change.

Thus, smart housing requires smart construction. Unfortunately, an important challenge for the building industry in recent decades has been lagging productivity growth for construction workers. Since 1993, worker productivity—measured as economic production per worker—has increased 50% per worker for the entire U.S. economy. The adoption of technology that assists workers is the primary reason for this dramatic change.

*Since 1993, construction worker productivity has increased only 15%.*

However, per NAHB Economics analysis, the construction sector has fallen behind the overall economy. Since 1993, construction worker productivity has increased only 15%. It is worth noting there have been gains. Some flawed, commonly cited studies, including one from McKinsey and Company consulting, suggest productivity growth in the sector has been negative. This is wrong and that particular study ignored the growing role of remodeling in residential construction (the consultants counted the number of workers in remodeling, which was growing, but completely ignored remodeling activity).

Nonetheless, while productivity has increased in residential construction, it has not expanded as fast as the overall economy. Why this has happened is more uncertain. An academic recently proposed that “monopoly power” by builders has artificially kept productivity low in the sector. This is absurd. With 50,000 home builders in the nation, even the largest builders have nothing like monopolistic market power.

The more commonly cited explanation is that the industry is decentralized and slow to change. A common example is framing a home today is not much different than it was 50 years ago. This too is a flawed explanation, given changes in tools, supply-chains, offsite component manufacturing (e.g. roofing trusses) and other technological changes for the sector.

My preferred explanation, which I have communicated to government economists, academics, and think-tankers, is that the rising total for regulatory costs and burdens has harmed productivity growth in the residential construction sector. As it has become harder to build, building has lagged in terms of productivity growth. As proof of this claim, NAHB economists recently showed that the white-collar share of workers in the sector has increased from almost 30% of employment 15 years ago to almost 40% today. This increase for office workers and relative decline for the trades is consistent with a rising red-tape burden for the sector and slow productivity growth.

While the research debate continues, the need for productivity gains is clear. A more productive workforce will help address the skilled labor shortage, will increase wages for home building, increase supply, and generally make housing and home building smarter. 🏡

*Dr. Robert Dietz is the Chief Economist for the National Association of Home Builders, where his responsibilities include economic forecasting, industry surveys, and policy research. Prior to joining NAHB in 2005, Robert worked as an economist for the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation. He is a native of Dayton, Ohio and earned a Ph.D. in Economics from The Ohio State University in 2003.*

# Welcome to Our New Members

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**North Equity Investors LLC** 425.773.5362  
 Spike: Zakir Parpia | NAHB 1 MBA 1  
**NRC Homes LLC** nrchomesgc.com  
**Seven Goats Construction** sevengoatsconstruction.com  
**Side by Side Ventures LLC dba Rock Solid Construction** 206.300.5522  
**Tennyson Construction Services LLC** tennysonremodel.com  
 Spike: Jennifer Tennyson | NAHB 1 MBA 1

## Associates

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 Spike: Ryan Gillis | NAHB 1 MBA 1  
**Apogee Sales Group LLC** 360.913.7348  
 Spike: Eric Shaw | NAHB 1 MBA 1  
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 Spike: Vaughan Seifert | NAHB 1 MBA 1  
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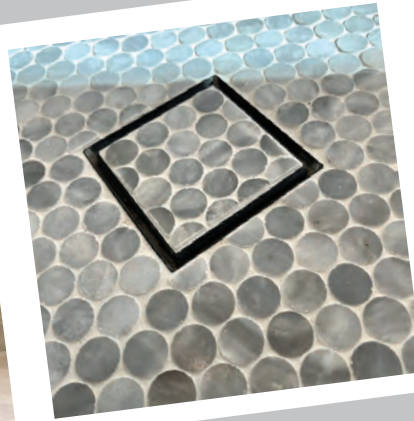
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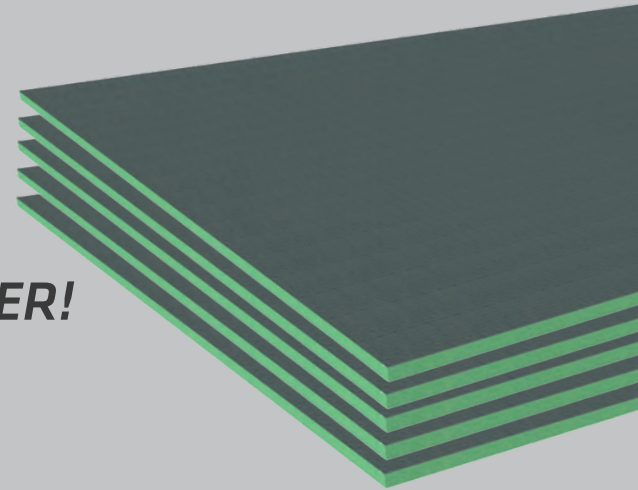
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