

For Immediate Release
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Green Acres, The First Net Zero Eco Community in Asheville

Nestled in the pastoral landscape of Merrills Cove in southeast Asheville near the Blue Ridge Parkway is a new community aptly named Green Acres, where the vision of a net zero energy community is being carefully cultivated by John McDermott, a talented engineer, designer and builder. With a studio and two houses completed, orchards and vegetable gardens planted, and solar panels in place, Green



Acres is well on its way to being the first net zero energy eco neighborhood in Asheville. Current plans are to add six more houses to the community.

John is uniquely prepared to bring this project to fruition. Perhaps best known locally as the co-founder of Highland Brewery, the first Asheville microbrewery, John also founded Bola Design to showcase his contemporary furniture. Having studied furniture design at San Diego State University, John's emphasis as a woodworker is on design that "is visually compelling, spiritually alive, and structurally sound." His pieces are meticulously crafted, most from locally sourced hardwoods that John mills and dries. His buildings reflect a similar attention to proper siting and landscaping, innovative contemporary design, good stewardship of locally sourced materials, and energy efficient features. This overriding respect for the environment logically derives from John's background in Agricultural Engineering at Rutgers University.

The many energy enhancements of the homes in Green Acres should save families between \$200 and \$300 per month in utility bills when compared to a conventional home of the same size; this can translate to a savings of approximately \$100,000 over the course of a 30-year mortgage, according to John.

"Green Acres is a real-world illustration of the viability of sustainable design--not only in environmental terms, materials used or energy efficiency, but also as it

applies to broader economic concerns, social impact, food, water and self-sufficiency," John says.

Green Acres homes have tight envelopes, with HERS Index Scores in the range of 50 to 60 (without solar panels in the equation) and blower-door test results from 1.0 to 1.5 air changes per hour at 50 pascals--far tighter than conventionally built houses. Among the additional features John describes are:

- passive solar design
- gridded and finished cement floors for thermal mass and low maintenance
- highly insulated (well beyond local building code) exterior walls, floors, and roof
- high efficiency geothermal heat pump
- photovoltaic arrays between 4 kw and 7.5 kw in capacity
- heat-recovery ventilator
- energy star rated (5% electricity discount for the life of the home)
- low VOC sub-floor and interior paint and finishes
- high performance Semco and Hurd windows
- more than 95% fluorescent and LED lighting
- locally sourced, recycled and salvaged materials, including milled on-site wind-fallen trees
- low maintenance exterior
- low maintenance native plants, edible landscaping, orchards, and organic vegetable gardens



The first green home completed in Green Acres is the Barn House. Its powerful design borrows from the endangered vernacular architecture of farmhouses and barns, iconic structures of the New England and Mid-Atlantic States. With sustainability and energy conservation as the primary design drivers, the Barn House combines modern building science with traditional building materials and techniques. Along with barn door sliders and an attached silo

structure (where two bathrooms are located), the house features a passive solar design with tons of internal thermal mass, geothermal HVAC, and photovoltaic solar panels. The Barn House is now home to the MacDonald family. Homeowner

André MacDonald says, "Our two-year search for a highly energy efficient, sustainable and interesting home in Asheville fortunately led us to the Barn House. Our decision to buy the home was immediate and agreed to with a handshake over a pint of excellent home brew! We consider ourselves very fortunate to be part of the Green Acres development."

Final touches are now being made to The Redbud House, a beautiful contemporary design home set in a small grove of redbuds, rhododendrons, and mountain laurels. In this passive solar structure, energy efficiency measures are complemented by modern design features including highly insulating commercial glass windows, concrete flooring, and steel I-beams. John is now living in the home as he fine-tunes its features. The Redbud



House will be featured on the Environmental and Conservation Organization's ECO Tour scheduled on August 17. Visitors can also tour the house on September 15, as the Redbud House will be the Green Building Council's House of the Month.

At Green Acres, John McDermott's vision is to develop a small sustainable community of comfortable, healthy, functional living spaces, all carefully sited to include organic gardens and edible landscaping. To see additional photos and learn more, please view the web site at www.greenacresasheville.com, or contact John at 828-681-0851 or john@bolafurniture.com.