

In going green, the Watkinses have not sacrificed style and charm in the renovation of their Lake Wylie home.



Pinkie Watkins and her husband, Vince, are committed to an eco-friendly remodel of their lakeside farmhouse.

# Behind The Beams

## Green Building Principles, Inside Out

BY MEAGHAN CLARK • PHOTOS BY SCOTT STILES

**P**inkie Watkins and her husband, Vince, care about the environment. Not just their own environment, which includes a current home renovation on Lake Wylie, but the bigger picture, as well. That's why they have decided to make their construction as "green" as possible.

From their sustainable roofing system to energy-efficient low-E windows, the Watkinses, with help from John Morgan and Adam Kaloz of Charlotte's Urban Building Group, are putting Mother Nature first. Their "green build" project will incorporate sustainable products, reclaimed materials, and Energy Star guidelines.

### Going Green Takes Some Green

The cost of doing a green build can be prohibitive for many homeowners. It's also what often scares away builders, project managers, and tradesmen. However, Morgan and Kaloz say that trepidation is usually based on a lack of understanding and knowledge of going green, noting that consumers can actually make changes that will end up saving them money. The Watkinses have a keen

understanding of such costs, and have made it their objective to do as much as they possibly can.

"We are going as green as our wallets will allow," says Pinkie Watkins. The family of four is adding a larger structure to the property and connecting it to the existing home via a breezeway. Every opportunity to repurpose materials is being considered; every chance to save costs and save the farm is on the agenda, as well.

The Watkinses know they are limited in going completely green, but are doing as much as they can, when they can, with plans for more green functionality down the road. Although their budget can't accommodate solar panels on their entire home right now, the couple will start with two panels on their garden shed and add more later on. >



With larger-than-normal overhangs, Dow SIS-Board insulated sheathing, and energy-tight windows, the home is a model for energy efficiency.

Back in 2007, when they purchased the former organic farm, the Watkinses bought with the knowledge that they would be expanding the little house to include room for their family. They were insistent that they would not drastically change the footprint of the land: They would not raze the current home; nor would they sacrifice any trees or landscaping. It was a tall order, but one they wholeheartedly felt was necessary.

"We think it doesn't pay environmentally to tear down a structure, even though it may cost less monetarily. In the end, our children will pay for it, and that just isn't worth it," says Watkins. The need to provide a clean, healthy, sustainable environment is what drove her and her husband to seek out a building company and design team that held the same principles.

"We had initially picked out another architect," she continues, "but his plans were too big and too modern, and he just didn't get us." Urban Building Group did.

### The Gospel Of Green

The ultimate goal for the Watkins family is to create a beautiful new structure that meshes with the existing structure, pays homage to the history of the land, and remains environmentally responsible. They also want to do all they can to avoid dumping more materials into landfills, which means repurposing as much as possible.

Urban Building Group has worked with the Watkinses to meet those goals.

"Sustainability is key," Morgan says. The president of UBG is passionate about his work — this project in particular — and does his best to spread the gospel of green. Fortunately for Morgan and Kaloz, talking to the Watkinses about sustainability is like preaching to the choir.

"The most important factor in a successful venture is to have comprehensiveness," Kaloz says. The native New Yorker explains that this concept applies, not just with the building process itself, but with the clients, as well. "You must have the homeowners on board," he emphasizes. He concurs with Morgan that working with the Watkinses has been an >





Vince (right) and Pinkie Watkins have worked closely with the builder to preserve the original footprint of their farm home. No trees were uprooted or cut down in the remodeling and rebuilding process.

absolute pleasure. “If the clients are educated and knowledgeable, it allows us to be more comprehensive in our approach.”

And these clients are educated. They don’t just talk it; they live it and work it. Watkins’ husband is a flooring sales representative and specializes in eco-friendly materials, such as cork and bamboo. The home will feature both of these types of flooring, in addition to reclaimed wood. It’s just one example of the many details that are beneficial to the family’s health — and the environment — that the eco-con-

scious couple are including in their home.

### Re-Purposefully Green

For Watkins, repurposing materials and being mindful of waste is simply a state of mind. “I hate to throw anything away,” she says. But sometimes her need to assimilate the old into her home goes beyond the merely practical. Sometimes, it is downright sentimental.

“We are using an old handrail from my granddad’s house, that he built and carved himself, in our new home,” she says. Many

fond memories of times spent with her relatives will be relived every time she walks up or down those stairs. “It will be a conversation piece for me,” she adds.

Morgan and Kaloz agree that the commitment from the Watkinses to do the best they can is completely commendable. “There is a middle ground,” Morgan says. UBG is aware that its clients have a budget to follow and are continually looking for — and finding — ways to be cost-effective and eco-friendly. Re-using materials in creative ways, such as taking the



The home features fiber cement siding and trim, bamboo and cork flooring, and a rainwater collection system hooked into the gutters.

old concrete driveway and incorporating it into the structure of the existing wall on the property line next to the water (rip wrap), is a prime example of sustainability at its best.

The UBG team encourages all homeowners to take as many steps as they can toward sustainability. Green builds have greater longevity, which ends up saving homeowners money. It is a point that is lost on many builders, but one that UBG stresses in every project it has taken on. "Building green is just a better way to build," Morgan insists.

Although they realize that homeowners are often fearful of expensive renovations, Morgan and Kaloz say many families are

most likely already using eco-friendly materials or methodologies without even knowing it. The two UBG principals also have a myriad of tips to improve the quality of the home and the quality of life for homeowners, and to keep Mother Nature happy, too.

"Seal the envelope," is one of Morgan's favorite sayings. He refers to sealing air gaps in a home by caulking holes around the exterior. Putting a vapor barrier in a crawl space is another top priority for Morgan and Kaloz.

"Use common sense," says Kaloz, who suggests homeowners consider the slope of their properties and remember that water always trickles down. >

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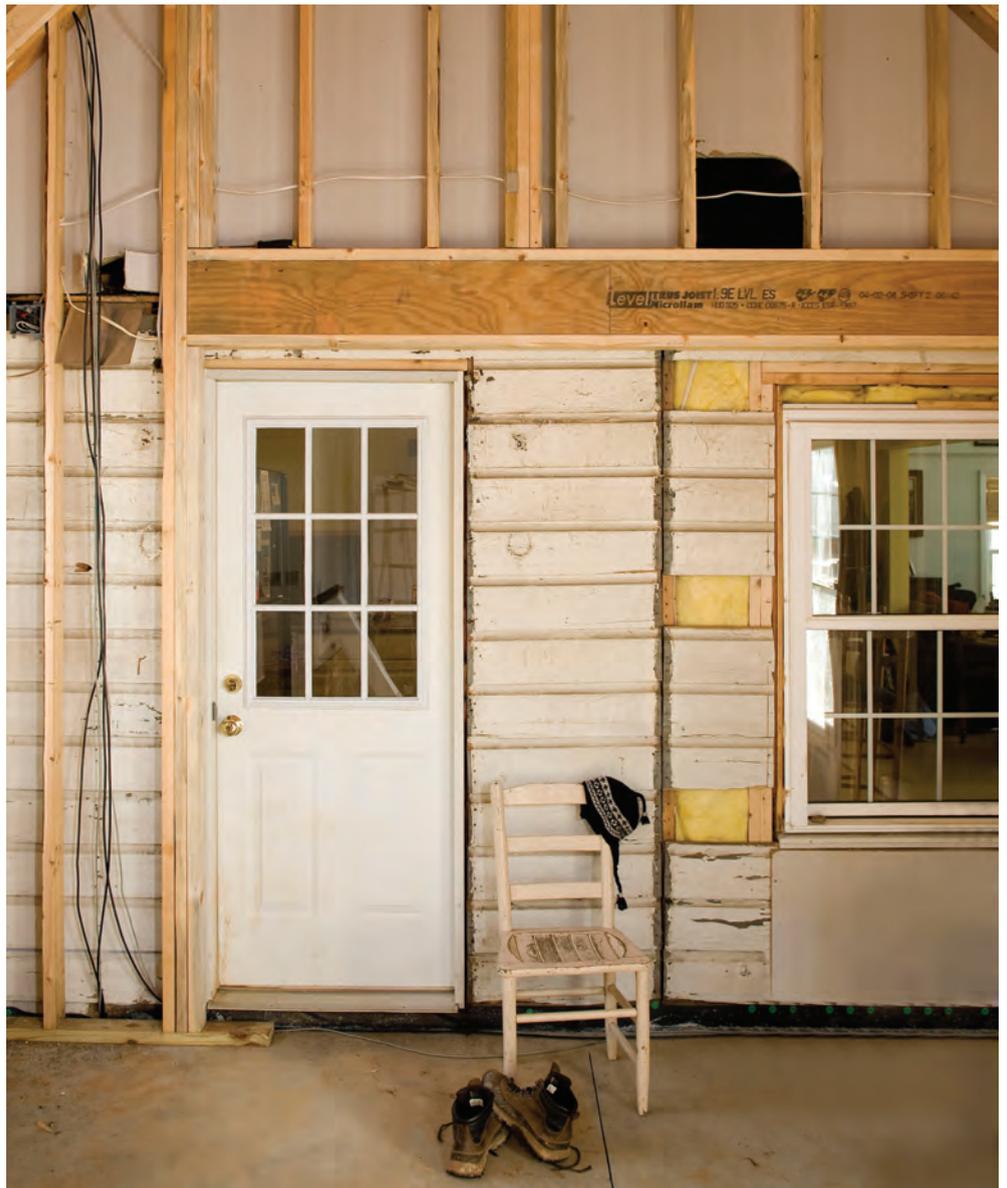
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The original home has been incorporated into the layout of the redesign.

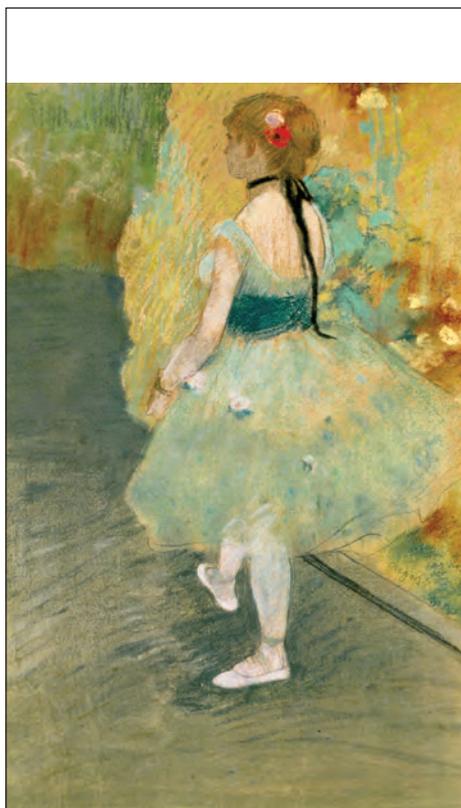
It's a concept that is not lost on Pinkie and Vince Watkins. They have plenty of common sense, and plenty of desire to take good care of the Earth. They also want to pay tribute to the original function of the land on which they live. Peach trees remain intact and flowers bloom everywhere. Though the property is no longer a working farm, its owners prize the fruits it brings forth, and frequently share them with friends and visitors. Even Kaloz admits to occasionally picking peaches from the trees when he's working on site! [TCW](#)

 For information on the health benefits of building green, visit our Web site at [www.todaycharlottewoman.com](http://www.todaycharlottewoman.com).

# Nuts And Bolts

## FEATURES OF PINKIE AND VINCE WATKINS' GREEN HOME

- Sustainable Roofing: A standing-seam metal roof gives longevity (2 to 3 times the lifespan of asphalt), durability, and solar reflectivity; and it can be recycled.
- Solar Panels
- Insulation: Icynene® spray foam insulation will achieve up to a 50-percent energy savings. Small gaps or channels in fiberglass insulation can drastically bring R values down, but spray foam insulation fills all gaps. The product is water blown and does not contain HFCs; it is class-1 fire retardant without the use of PBDE's; and it will qualify for LEED credits, as well as up to 120 points for NAHB National Green Building Standards.
- Dow STYROFOAM SIS™ Board: A structural insulated sheathing, composed of 80-percent post-consumer recycled content, is used in place of typical plywood and housewrap, adding an additional 3 to the R value of the home while reducing condensation in the wall cavities.
- Conditioned, Sealed Crawl Space
- Reclaimed Brick Veneer
- Fiber Cement Siding and Trim: The addition of fiber cement siding, with its durability, longevity, and lower maintenance requirements, adds to the sustainability of the home and does not negatively affect the environment.
- Low-E Windows: The use of low-emissivity-coated glass, filled with argon gas between the layers, drastically reduces the loss of hot or cool air from the home and helps to maintain internal climate control.
- Rainwater Capture: The home is equipped with half-round gutters tied into rain barrels as a free source of water for landscape irrigation on the property.
- High-Efficiency HVAC
- Tankless Gas Water Heater: The installation of a tankless system allows for an endless supply of hot water, less wasted space, and a much smaller carbon footprint.
- Low-Flow Shower Heads and Faucets
- Programmable Energy Star Appliances
- Renewable Flooring: Low-maintenance bamboo or cork flooring is sustainable, durable, and looks great.



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EDGAR DEGAS, French, 1834-1917. *Dancer in Green*, circa 1878. Pastel on paper. New Orleans Museum of Art: Gift of Charles C. Henderson in memory of Nancy S. Henderson.

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