

November

2013

MEECA Member Highlight

Meadowlark Builders: A Better Way to Build?



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MEADOWLARK BUILDERS: A BETTER WAY TO BUILD?

By: Brindley Byrd

“Impeding laminar flow.” “Solar thermal flywheel.” “Wattle and daub.” “Imparts negative ions.” These are just a few of the phrases uttered by Doug Selby, Principal at Meadowlark Builders on one of his company’s award winning Behind the Drywall® tours. The one I attended happened to be at Meadowlark’s latest project dubbed “Built to Last” in Ann Arbor, MI where they are building using centuries old traditions with 21st Century technology.

Guided by clients hailing from Europe wanting a structure more substantial than what typical American stick-built construction offers, Meadowlark is reaching into the past with a modern day take on wattle and daub construction. This earthen encased method of construction takes me back to my days in college learning about housing in developing countries. Looking at it the way Meadowlark is might actually be a better way to build.

Those of us in energy efficiency know what an ICF is -- insulated concrete forms for the initiated. Typically, these ‘Lego-block’ like components have 2-inch polystyrene sides that are connected together via an internal plastic cross-bracing system. These forms are then stacked and filled with concrete. This system provides an excellent structural wall that virtually eliminates diffusion (air leaking through a surface), is extremely quiet and provides substantial thermal mass keeping the home comfortable with minimal energy supply. Meadowlark is using an ICF system for their Built to Last project; however, they are not using polystyrene units.

Instead, they have built every exterior wall of this 2-story, 2400 s.f. home using Durisol ICFs. Why Durisol? Because Meadowlark is hedging that this construction technology is a better way to build. There are many features of this product that substantiate this investment. Durisol ICFs are earth-based units made mostly of wood particles and clay. They are porous, lightweight, and have been extensively utilized throughout Europe and other parts of the world for over 70-years. Other features include the fact that they do not decay, will not support the growth of mold and are fully recyclable.



Durisol ICF block with preinstalled mineral-wool insulation to drive thermal mass to the interior.

From an energy savings standpoint, Durisol ICF blocks offer unique ability to modulate moisture over other ICF products. Because the wood fibers and clay are held together with portland cement, the porous nature of the unit allow for moisture to pass through the system. This allows the walls to stay cool during the summer reducing the need for air-conditioning and helps keep them warm in the winter by retaining heat generated on the interior. These units do emit negative ions that scrub air as it passes through the wall increasing the indoor air quality. More information about Durisol ICF blocks can be found at www.durisolbuild.com.

Doug Selby is the Principal at Meadowlark Builders. He has lead his multi-faceted company into



Doug Selby showing how the energy use curve shifts in a Durisol ICF constructed home.

being one of the most sought after home builders in southeast Michigan. Services Meadowlark offers include home building, full-scale remodeling, handyman and energy auditing. He is keen on reducing the energy intensity of the homes Meadowlark builds, remodels or retrofits. More importantly, he and the rest of the Meadowlark team apply these better building practices to increase the comfort and safeguard the health of those select people who call themselves owners of a Meadowlark home.

Meadowlark Builders is building in a better way and a Founding Member of the Michigan Energy Efficiency Contractors Association.

MEECA is a non-profit trade association created to support our core members: companies that design, install and evaluate energy savings solutions in Michigan's residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

MEECA advocates that Michigan have the most robust, reliable, qualified and predictable energy efficiency industry in the nation.



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