

# A home's beauty should be more than skin deep

**W**hen buying a new home, what you see isn't always what you get. While a home might look beautiful — with a well conceived design, appealing materials, striking colors, plenty of space, and brand new appliances — it's what can't be seen that should get a person's attention.



**David Tschetter**  
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## HOME BUYING

A systems approach to new home construction could be viewed in the same terms as the make-up of a human being. For example if the skeletal structure (foundation), respiratory (heating and ventilation), nervous (electrical) and circulatory (plumbing) systems of a home aren't in good working order, the home's outer beauty can't possibly overcome its own malignant problems on the inside. It's for this reason that people who are looking for a new home should do their research and learn as much as they can about the things they can't see in the home.

One of the first steps a buyer should take is to ask if the inner workings, or "guts", of the home work in conjunction with one another as an overall system, and aren't just individual components. They should identify builders who implement a systematic approach and have integrated all of the systems to work together. This forethought helps to ensure the quality, durability, comfort, livability and longevity of the home.

All builders and contractors say they "build to code", but often times "code" isn't good enough. Rather, building to code represents the bare minimum requirements of new home construction for the municipality in which the home is built, and doesn't nearly approach the quality or reliability a person wants from this major investment. There are ways to find out whether or not a home exceeds basic building codes:

**Skeleton** — ask if the builder did an independent soil inspection, and if they went to the extent of having a soil engineer check the entire foundation area of the home once excavation work had been completed. Question additional items such as whether or not the framing and floor joints are sized correctly, or have been stretched to the limits of what building codes will allow, and if the property includes a hard pipe perimeter drain system.

**Respiratory system** — ask about the home's heating, ventilation and mechanical systems and if they have been engineered and sized for the home and designed as a system for the entire house. Inquire as to whether or not it's the most economic and efficient system possible, if it utilizes the most energy efficient appliances for comfort and cost savings, and does the system deal with environmental issues such as indoor air pollution.

**Nervous system** — a home's electrical system should have a panel that is sized properly so individual circuits aren't operating at their maximum limits. Unless a homebuyer finds out what the electrical capacity

is of their new home, they may constantly pop circuits when they flip electrical switches.

**Circulatory** — questions regarding the circulatory, or plumbing system of a home, should focus on the materials being used for water piping and fixtures. Be sure to check the type of water heater being used and if it provides sealed combustion. Features such as a Jetted tub won't be so special if you can't fill it with hot water. On the flip side, ask if water lines were installed in exterior walls or cantilevers, which could create problems with freezing.

Understandably, many of these questions are very technical and a buyer may not know if they're getting the answers they want to hear. It's important to know and trust the builder you're working with, and ask them some of the tough questions listed above.

A buyer should expect a builder to provide documentation about all of the work that has been done to a home, including detailed reports. Reputable builders will even go to the extent of providing digital images of the house being built throughout the construction process.

For people who are considering the purchase of a new home, always remember that beauty isn't only on the outside; it's what's on the inside that counts.

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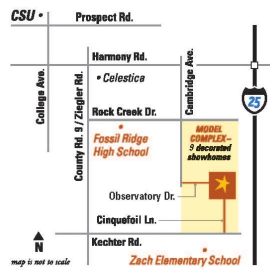
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