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SUSTAINABLE GREEN HOMES AND THE ART OF BALANCING THE BUDGET

Building any type of a house whether it's a sustainable green home or an outlandish architectural home requires a fine art of balancing the budget with the project aspirations. Patience and dedication are needed to achieve this. There are a few more added complexities and features to building a sustainable green home, which increases the budget. It's a bit like going to the super market and buying organic foods, they are going to cost you a bit more, but you know the food is better for your health and environment, and is the more ethical choice to make.

Building a home can be one of the most creative life journeys we undertake with many ups and downs along the way, if we are intending to do it well. When the house is built it represents a testament to the hard work and commitment from clients, consultants and contractors who all work together to achieve a structure that will likely last 70 years or more and be full of life memories.

Most often than not, aspirational sustainable projects are scaled back to meet the realistic budget

targets of a client. This can be a stressful time for would be home owners who aren't familiar with how the design process works. Sustainable green homes really represent the best standards and ideas in how we build as a society and civilisation. They engage the environment by using sun and wind for natural heating and cooling, using healthy materials and rely on a modern technology to maximize efficiencies. What happens with sustainable green homes is the project targets are set high, the green standards are laid out, the dream list is written and the team then sets to work heading in this direction, and so the design process begins.

The design process is the relationship between the client and designers. It's a back and forth relationship based on open dialogue where ideas are expressed, listened to and then begin to take shape in the floor plan and overall design. The underpinning success of the project is often a positive chemistry that is found in a relationship between the team with the realisation that all design has a knock on effect to

the budget. The budget is arguably the most important item, after the team relationship. Without proper consideration by both parties (client and designers) this will either determine if a project goes ahead, or unfortunately becomes a victim of overly high expectations, and lack of compromises which don't match the budget. This is the art of balancing the budget.

The design process can be likened to a game of tennis, where the client and designers go back and forth creating dialogue until there is a win. The win represents the end of design and the beginning of the construction stage, where the design aligns with the budget. Achieving the budget is very much a back and forth process and does not happen on the first round. It requires the project team to commit and work through obstacles with a quantity surveyor to finally get the project over the finish line knowing all bases have been covered and a clear design path has been created for the project to proceed on budget. ■

Written by Duncan Firth
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Kerikeri Passive Solar House, Clients and designers worked extensively to get the house in on budget, with ups and downs along the way to achieve this



Solarei is an architecture design firm specialising in green homes. Homes that reduce harmful impacts on the environment and are just better to live in.....



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photo: coatesville, rodney, passive solar home