

# HILL COUNTRY HOME

Houston's green architect LaVerne Williams gets LEED Silver Certification with the first certified green home in the Texas Hill Country.



**By Donna Mosher**

Hunt, Texas will never be the same! It is now the locale of the first certified green home in the Texas Hill Country. The home was designed by LaVerne Williams, of Environment Associates, for homeowners Bernadell Larson and Stu Thompson and built by Sierra Homes of Fredericksburg. The LEED recognition honors the homeowners' commitment to build a green home that would cost less to own and operate, would last for generations, and that reflects their dedication to environmental sustainability.

"We want the home to be the last one we ever have to build," said Larson, "and to be as affordable and maintenance-free as possible as time goes on."

"This home is designed for passive sustainability," said Williams. "If necessary, the homeowners can live in relative comfort without any off-site sources of power or water. With the rising cost of energy

and increasingly scarce resources, more clients are seeking our ability to design homes that provide livable conditions in spite of future environmental events and basic essentials supply challenges. Designing a home for 'passive sustainability' requires an expert's use of materials and the integration of proven architectural techniques in an aesthetic manner, which my firm has been perfecting for more than three decades of green home design."

A 20,000-gallon rainwater harvesting system provides the sole source of water for the home and the separate guest quarters. The standing-seam metal roof will last a minimum of 50 years and doesn't contribute pollutants to the rainwater collected on it, as would an asphalt or composition roof. Natural ventilation and daylight increase the passive sustainability features of the house.

Larson and Thompson named their home "Sky Fire at North Fork"



for its view of magnificent sunsets on the north fork of the Guadalupe River. Maximizing the views while maintaining passive sustainability features presented a challenge for architect Williams.

“The primary orientation of the home is southwest, the worst you can have for this climate because it is exposed to the afternoon sun,” said Williams. He addressed the problem of protecting the 2,200 sq. ft. of air-conditioned space by designing extensive overhangs to shade the house, which

also shade a good portion of the 1,300 sq. ft. of outdoor living space.

The exterior envelope (walls and roof) is constructed of energy-efficient, sound-insulating structural insulated panels (SIPs), a high-performance building system of rigid insulation sandwiched between two structural skins. The non-vented attic is designed to maintain



## ABOUT ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATES

Architect, bioneer and building ecologist LaVerne Williams, AIA, LEED AP is the Founder and CEO of Environment Associates, Architects & Consultants of Houston, Texas, an award winning architectural firm noted for its dedication to quality of life matters and for its pioneering green home and healthful home projects since 1975. From its inception, Environment Associates has been dedicated exclusively to the creation of environmentally responsible architecture. Williams is often referred to as one of the “grandfathers of green building” and Environment Associates is thought to be the oldest architectural practice in Texas dedicated exclusively to the creation of architecture that strives to be environmentally responsible. For more information, visit [www.environmentassoc.com](http://www.environmentassoc.com).



## ABOUT THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

The U.S. Green Building Council is a nonprofit membership organization whose vision is a sustainable built environment within a generation. Its membership includes corporations, builders, universities, government agencies, and other nonprofit organizations. Since USGBC's founding in 1993, the Council has grown to more than 15,000 member companies and organizations, a comprehensive family of LEED® green building rating systems, an expansive educational offering, the industry's popular Greenbuild International Conference and Expo ([www.greenbuildexpo.org](http://www.greenbuildexpo.org)), and a network of 77 local chapters, affiliates, and organizing groups. For more information, visit [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org).

## ABOUT LEED® FOR HOMES

LEED® for Homes is a third-party certification system for high-performance green homes. Developed and administered by USGBC, LEED for Homes awards points to projects in seven categories of environmental performance: Location & Linkages, Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Indoor Environmental Quality, Energy & Atmosphere, Homeowner Awareness, and Innovation and Design. To date, more than 540 homes have been LEED-certified, and over 13,000 have been registered and are under development. For more information, visit [www.thegreenhomeguide.org](http://www.thegreenhomeguide.org).



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**CHRISTOPHER MANNING**  
1200 Smith Street, Suite 1600  
Houston, Texas 77002  
**713.621.6646**  
**cmanning@manning-financial.com**  
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moderate temperatures, increasing its functionality. The SIPs were made in nearby Fredericksburg, reducing the distance necessary for the product to travel to reach the home site.

A high-efficiency, environmentally friendly heating and air conditioning system with cleanable metal ducting reduces energy costs, dehumidifies and provides fresh air ventilation for healthy indoor air quality. Stainless steel mesh in the foundation controls termites and eliminates the need for toxic chemicals for pest control.

Indoors, efficiency and health are assured by the use of solid wood finish materials; hardwood, tile and linoleum flooring; wall paints without volatile organic compounds (VOCs); fluorescent lighting; Energy Star appliances and low-e argon windows.

Additional points for the LEED award were given for eliminating water runoff and soil erosion, reducing construction waste and landscaping with drought-tolerant native plants.

"The U.S. Green Building Council is proud to help celebrate the owners' and Environment Associates' commitment to greener living," said Michelle Moore, Senior Vice President of Policy & Market Development, U.S. Green Building Council. "Williams's leadership is at the national forefront of quality and his example can help us all to live better by reducing our environment footprint, cutting our utility bills, and coming home to a healthier place to live." 

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