

## Real Estate eNews The Health House®

Asthma rates have doubled in the United States in the last two decades, according to a recent New York Times article. One hypothesis for this increase is the contaminated indoor air many of us breathe in every day. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency lists poor indoor air quality as the fourth largest environmental threat to our country.



Poor air quality can occur indoors through the use of cleaning products, the existence of biological hazards from mold or pets, volatile organic compounds (VOC's) emitted from paint or other compounds, and other factors.

Contaminated air not only threatens health, it can also result in structural rot within walls, attics and around windows from excess moisture, as well as damp basements.



A home building process designed by the American Lung Association (ALA) concentrates on combining green building practices and a concentration on improved ventilation systems to improve indoor air quality. A home built following ALA requirements is eligible to receive a Health House® certification. At present, no other program in the residential building industry can match the ALA program because of strict standards which include site inspections during construction and performance testing upon a home's completion.

What are the advantages of building a Health House® home? While this program is still in its early stages, owners of a Health House® receive the immediate benefit of improved air quality and a comfortable living environment. Building materials are carefully selected for low toxicity and environmental sustainability.

A Health House® is more energy efficient, lowers energy costs and requires less maintenance. These benefits result in a home that holds its value over time. The certification also serves as a marketing tool for resale.

Some of the components found in a Health House® are:

- Foundation waterproofing and moisture control
- Air sealing and advanced insulation techniques
- Energy efficient, high performance windows
- High efficiency air filtration
- Whole house ventilation
- Humidity control
- Carefully selected and reviewed interior finishes

While construction of a Health House® home may cost three to five percent more than traditional construction techniques, savings of 30 to 40 percent in utility bills is often realized. In addition, these homes are built to standards that qualify for energy efficient mortgage programs.

