



Designed for the Budget

Affordable net zero means targeting
public areas with higher-quality finishes

BY SEAN GROOM

Selecting the fixtures and finishes for the 2017 ProHOME was an exercise in restraint. Targeting the affordable segment of their housing market (about \$339,000) with a net-zero house means that much of Prudent Living's budget is devoted to performance—the highly insulated shell and the efficient mechanical systems. The trick to complementing the high-performance aspects with aesthetically pleasing elements that appeal to buyers is to balance the remaining budget between builder-grade items where appropriate and higher-quality materials in the right places. Because of the magazine coverage and sponsor donations, Tim Biebel shifted the ProHOME toward higher-quality materials relative to the other spec

houses in the development, but he used the same decision-making process. He spent more on the public areas—like the kitchen—and looked toward builder-grade materials for plumbing fixtures and bathroom vanities. It's no accident that the higher-grade features are those that would be more expensive to remodel. The lower-cost materials were selected to help Prudent Living meet their target sales price, provide good performance, and allow the future homeowner to swap them out for more stylish versions at a later date. □

Sean Groom is a contributing editor. Photos by Brian McAward, except where noted.



TRADITIONAL SIDING AND TRIM

The ProHOME is a modern-day interpretation of a Cape—the traditional story-and-a-half form is embellished with intersecting gables. In keeping with the Cape influence and the emphasis on low horizontal lines, the ProHOME is clad in clapboard siding. Rather than using the lowest-cost option—vinyl siding—Prudent Living installed Boral TruExterior bevel siding. The clapboards maintain the simple, traditional Cape style and TruExterior has the depth, crisp shadow lines, solid feel, and grain profile of wood, without the maintenance issues.

The Boral siding and trim boards are a poly-ash material made from a combination of refined coal fly ash, glass fibers, and polymers. This engineered material has several advantages over wood, vinyl, and PVC as an exterior cladding. The Boral is rated for ground contact and won't rot or delaminate in this wet environment—an important consideration in a location where snow often buries several courses of siding for weeks at a time. The TruExterior material can also be painted dark colors and the end cuts don't need to be primed or sealed as the material largely resists dimensional changes due to temperature and humidity.



Barely visible fasteners. All trim boards are attached with FastenMaster's Cortex system of screws and Boral plugs. The siding is blind-nailed with a single visible face nail at the bottom edge at each butt joint.