

The benefits of a high performing home: The Waitakere NOW Home

The family loved the social, health and cost-saving benefits of this house so much, they looked for the same features in their new house.

The Waitakere NOW Home was Beacon's first live research project, designed and built to show that a sustainable house can be built affordably using materials and products available today. A young family of four lived in the house for two years, going about their lives while the performance of the home was remotely monitored



Warmer and drier

From the start the family of four loved the Waitakere NOW Home. They'd come from a cold, damp house that was difficult to heat and needed dehumidifiers on 24/7.

What a change! Sun poured into the new house during the day. At night warmth radiated off the polished concrete floor, which was designed to store heat from the sun and release it when the air temperature dropped. And the family quickly learned the importance of pulling thermal curtains in winter. These features, combined with extra insulation and double glazing, kept the warmth in.

And with all the natural light flooding in, the family switched the lights on less often.

Good air flow negated the need to air the house out, and there was no condensation or mould – they didn't unpack their dehumidifier at all.

Healthier and happier

The family soon noted that they had fewer illnesses. What's more, one of the children suffered from asthma prior to moving into the house, and that showed improvement too.

Less expected, perhaps, was that the family's social life blossomed after moving into the Waitakere NOW Home. Friends and relatives wanted to visit. The family attributes this to living in a quality house.

The experience of the family indicates that a healthy home is not only vital for physical health, they are equally important for mental health.

"We couldn't help but be positive," they said. "We've realised the impact a house can have on the rest of our life."

A smarter home now a necessity

The family later moved into their own home. Here's what they looked for:

- a north-facing sun trap
- good natural light indoors
- full insulation (ceiling, walls, floor)
- double-glazed windows to keep the heat in and the noise out
- dry – free from mould and other moisture-related problems
- a range hood in the kitchen and an extractor fan in the bathroom to remove moisture in these very wet areas
- well ventilated to keep down moisture and avoid overheating
- wide eaves that let the winter sun in but keep the summer sun out
- no wasted walls – good design and layout
- good access to public transport and community facilities.

For more information:

- Beacon website www.beaconpathway.co.nz/new-homes/article/what-is-the-waitakere-now-home-project