



# RiverdaleNetZeroHome



2009 May 02

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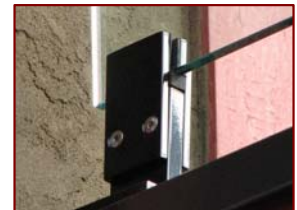
# Focus of Presentation

- Tell you about the house
- Show you:
  - What net zero energy means
  - How we achieved it
  - What we've learned
- Answer your questions



# My Role...

- I am a solar system project developer
- I am not an equipment supplier
- I have no vested interest in any technology
  
- My interest is that you choose wisely
  - with your eyes wide open
  - based on the facts and whether it is right for you or not.
  
- We are open for questions, challenges...





# Riverdale NetZero Energy Home – Edmonton

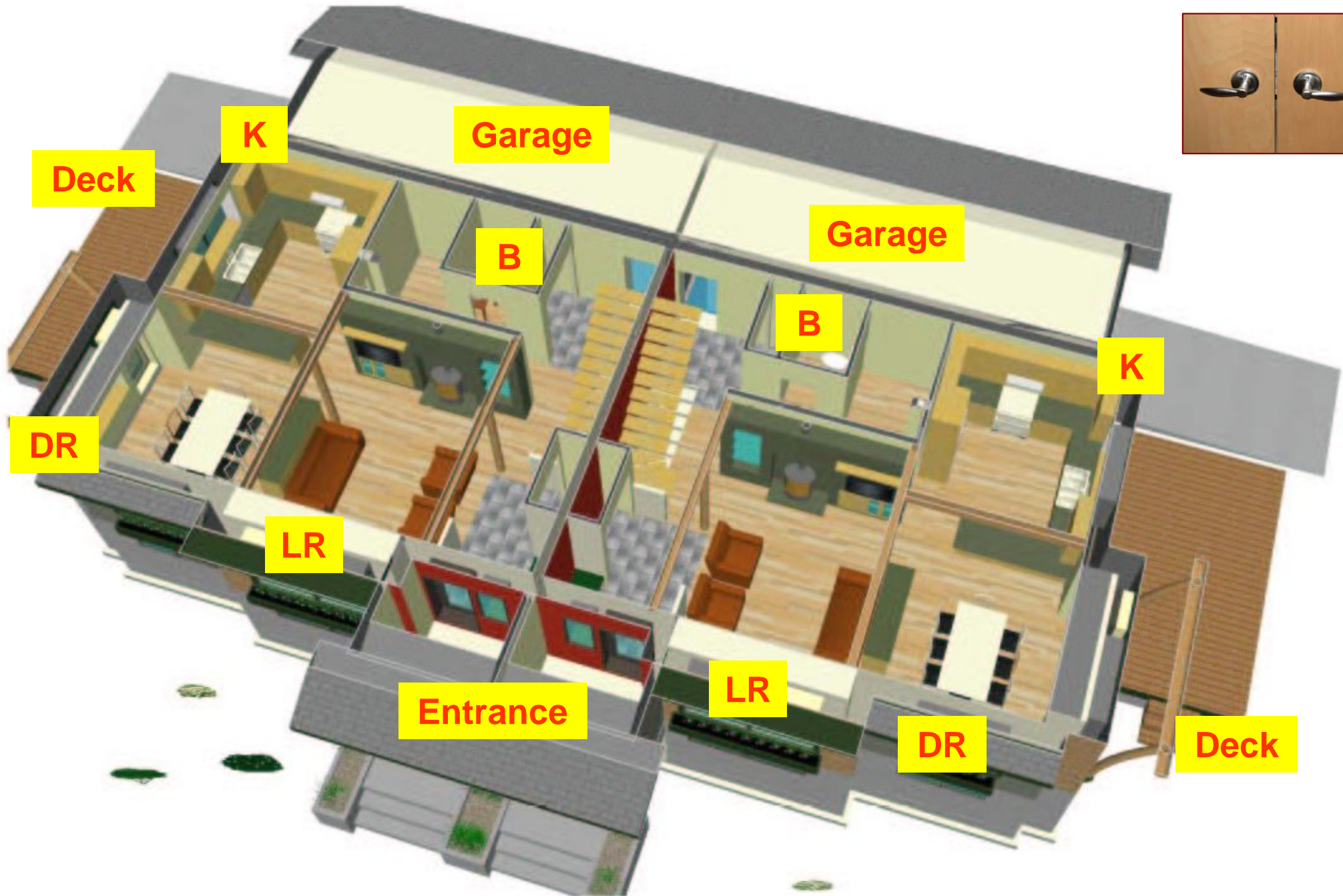


- duplex
- 1844 ft<sup>2</sup> per side
- 2519 ft<sup>2</sup> including basement
- 3 bedrooms

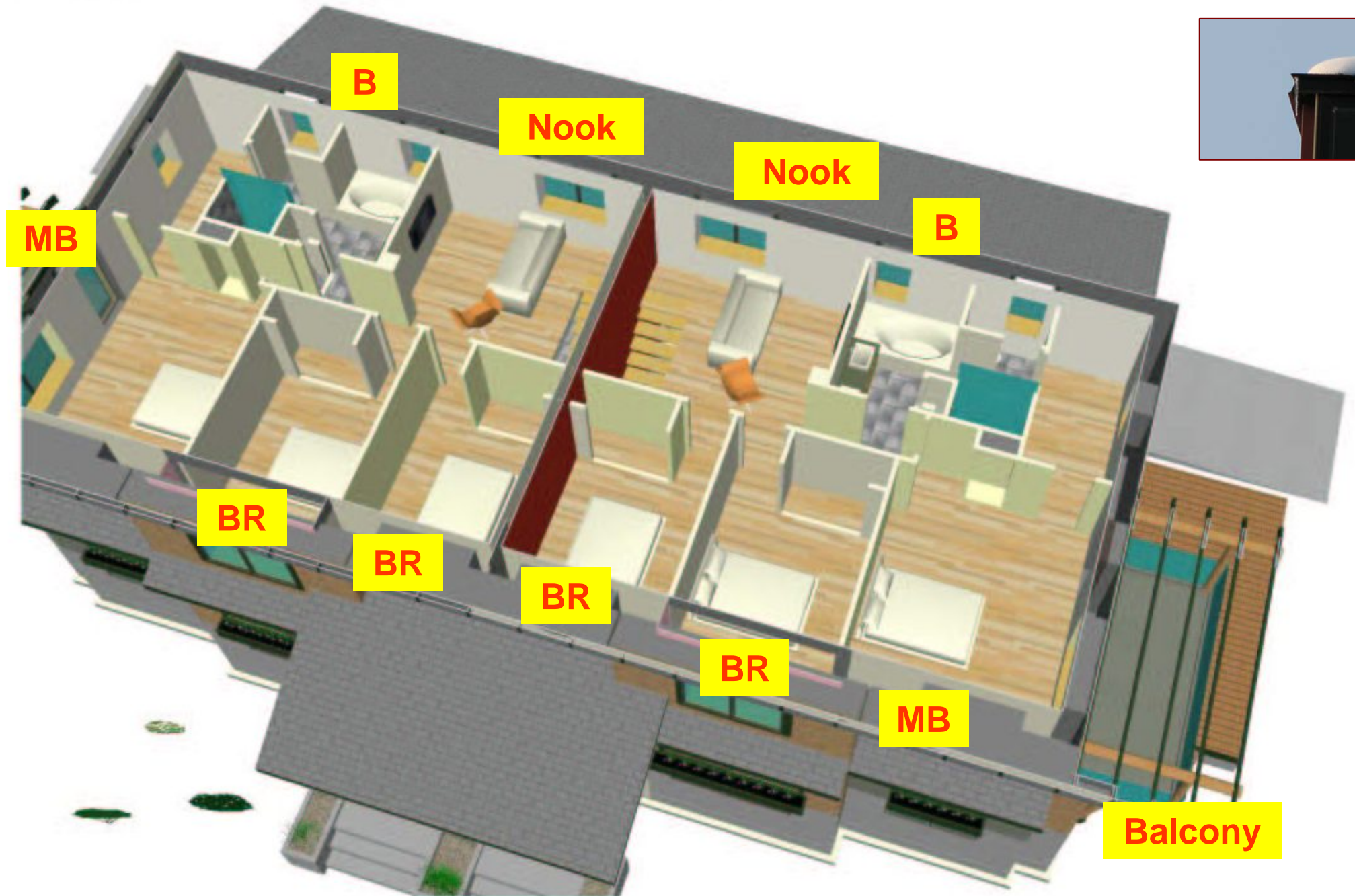
All numbers shown are for  
each side of the duplex.



# Main Floor



# Upper Floor





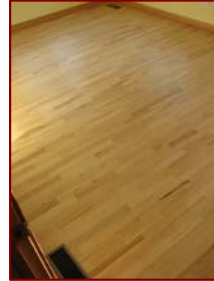
# Natural Landscaping

- beauty
- nature
- low maintenance
- fresh secure nearby food...

- Native and low water plants
- Beautiful and edible plants
- Rain water collection
- Minimal lawn
- Ron Berezan TheUrbanFarmer.ca #7



# Sustainable Materials, Air Quality



- Use materials that:
  - Had low manufactured energy
  - Are cleanly manufactured
  - Have low transportation energy
  - Are highly durable
- Have high recycled content, are recyclable
  - Uses feature beams recycled from liquor store
  - Uses siding from the old house for finish exterior around the windows
  - Recycled floor from a gym
  - Recycled window and door moldings
- Have low off-gassing of VOC's (volatile organic compounds)

Sustainable materials:  
[GreenAlberta.ca](http://GreenAlberta.ca)





# Riverdale NetZero Team – Proponents



- Peter Amerongen Habitat Studio and Workshop
  - designer, builder, developer
- Andy Smith, P.Eng. Solnorth Engineering
  - structural engineer, passive solar heating specialist
- Gordon Howell, P.Eng. Howell-Mayhew Engineering
  - electrical engineer, solar PV specialist
- Plus 45 additional team members...



# Net Zero Energy Healthy Housing Competition

- Design-build competition (without being paid for it)
- 15 were selected:
  - New Brunswick – Moncton
  - Quebec – Montreal, Eastman, Hudson
  - Ontario – 2 in Toronto, 1 in Ottawa
  - Manitoba – Winnipeg
  - Saskatchewan – Prince Albert
  - Alberta – Edmonton, 2 in Red Deer, 1 in Calgary
  - British Columbia – Kamloops, Vancouver
- CMHC brand: “EQuilibrium Housing”



HEALTHY HOUSING FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT    MAISON Saine POUR UN ENVIRONNEMENT SAIN

Sustainable Housing    Projet de démonstration  
Demonstration Project    de logement durable

CMHC's EQuilibrium Initiative    L'initiative EQuilibrium de la SCHL

[www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca)    [www.schl.ca](http://www.schl.ca)






# Elements of EQuilibrium Housing

## ■ Health

- Indoor air quality
  - Emissions
  - Thermal comfort
  - Moisture
  - Particle control
  - Ventilation
- Daylighting
- Noise control
- Water quality

## ■ Energy

- 
- Annual energy consumption
  - Renewable energy strategy
  - Peak electricity demand
  - Embodied energy strategy

## ■ Resources

- Sustainable materials
- Durability
- Material efficiency
- Water conservation
- Adaptability / flexibility

## ■ Environment

- Land use planning
- Sediment and erosion control
- Storm water management
- Waste water management
- Solid waste management
- Air pollution emissions

## ■ Affordability

- Financing
- Marketability

# Why is it called a Net Zero Energy Home?

- A home that generates all its heat and electricity on an annual basis.
- It still uses energy...
- but it gets all its energy from renewable sources (usually solar)

Net zero is just the dividing line between

- **net deficit** (when your house needs energy from the grid because it doesn't generate enough), and
- **net surplus** (when the environment is better off because your house exists).





# The Design Challenge: Is it possible to achieve NZ energy?

(after all, it's pretty cold and dark here in the winter...)

- An average house uses:
  - Around 6 times more heating fuel energy than electricity!
  - Biggest challenge is not in supplying household electricity...
  - Instead ... it is in supplying home heating!



# How do you plan for a net zero energy house?

- **Minimise:**

the heating and electricity consumption of the house

- The cheapest energy option,  
but it is boring...

- **Maximise:**

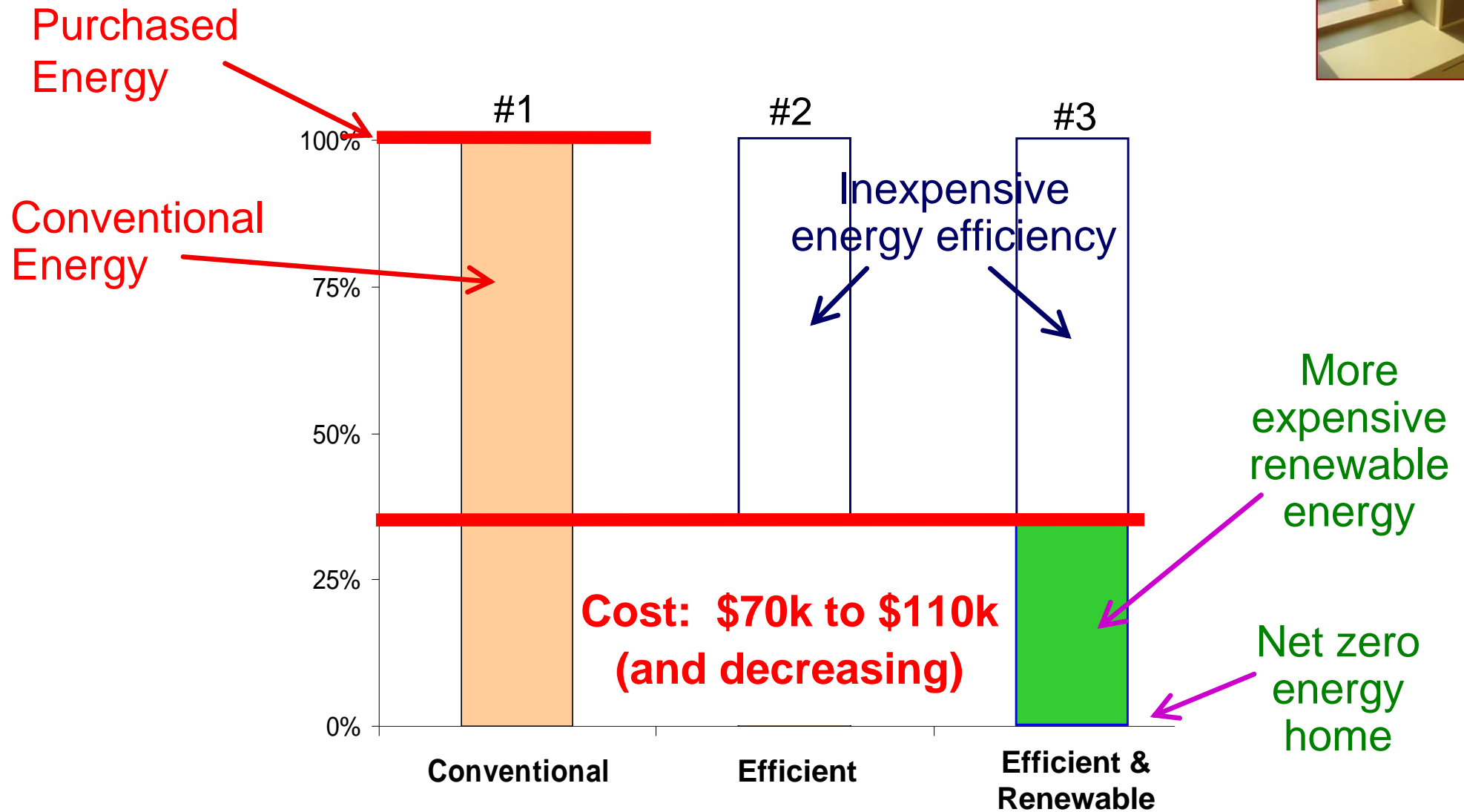
solar energy supply to the house for its heating and electricity

- The most expensive energy option,  
but it is the most exciting...





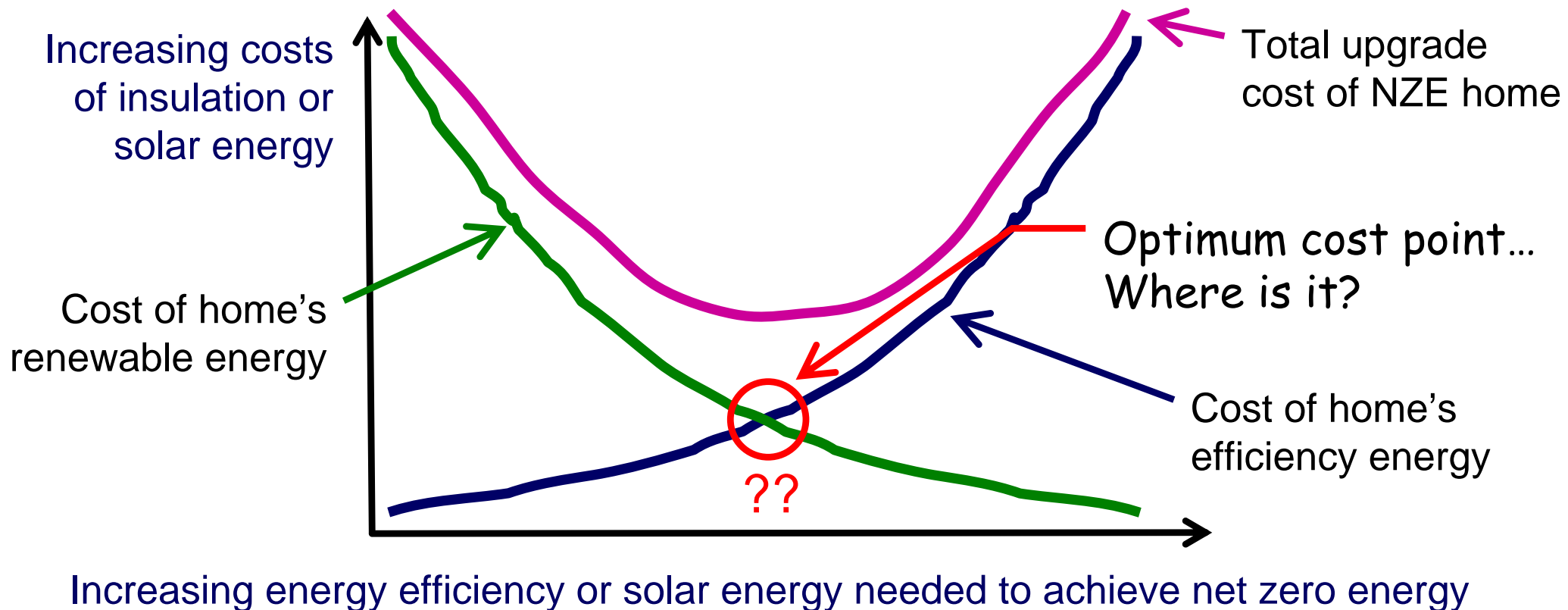
# Achieving Net Zero Energy



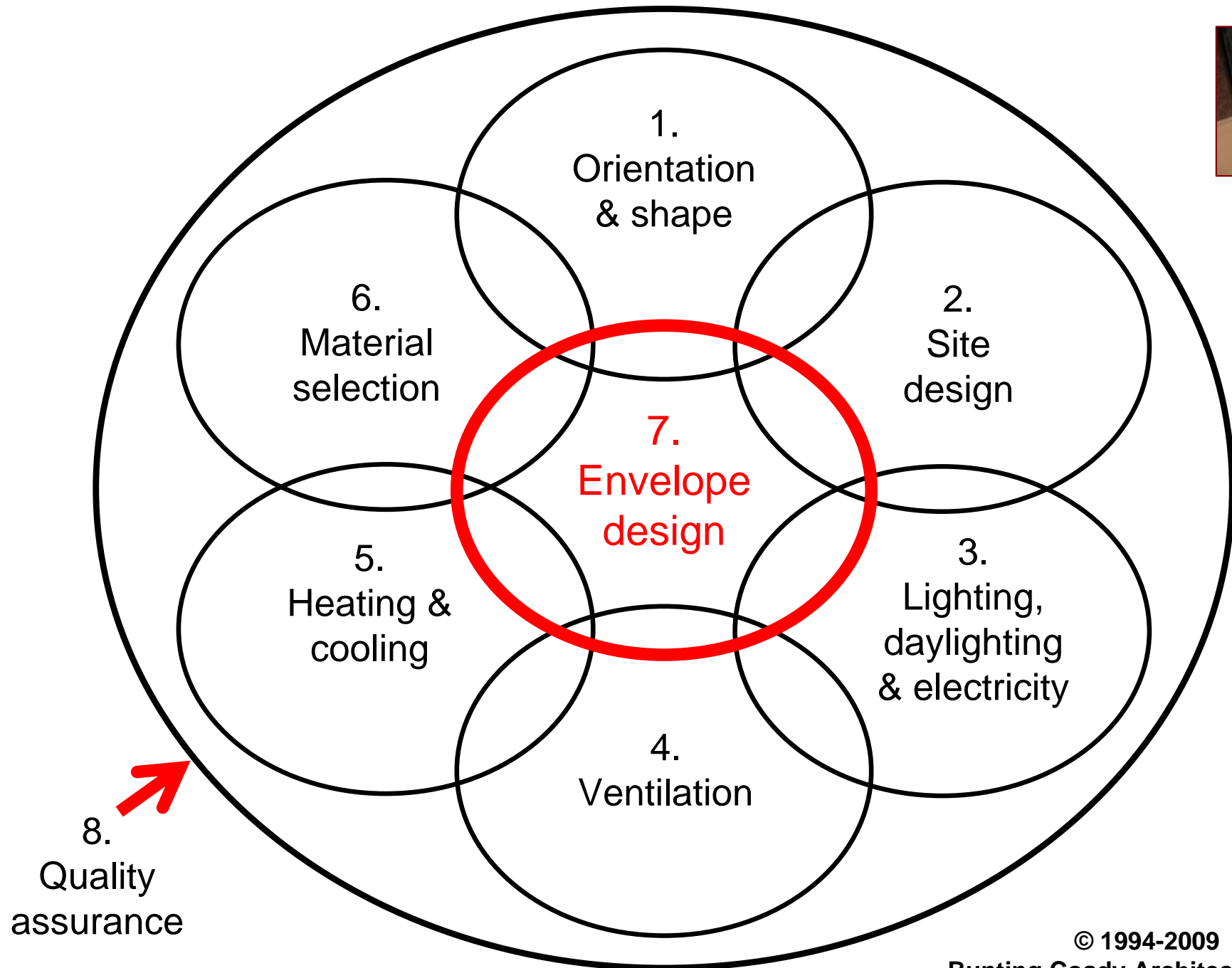
# Design Challenge

Where do we find the minimum construction cost to achieve net zero?

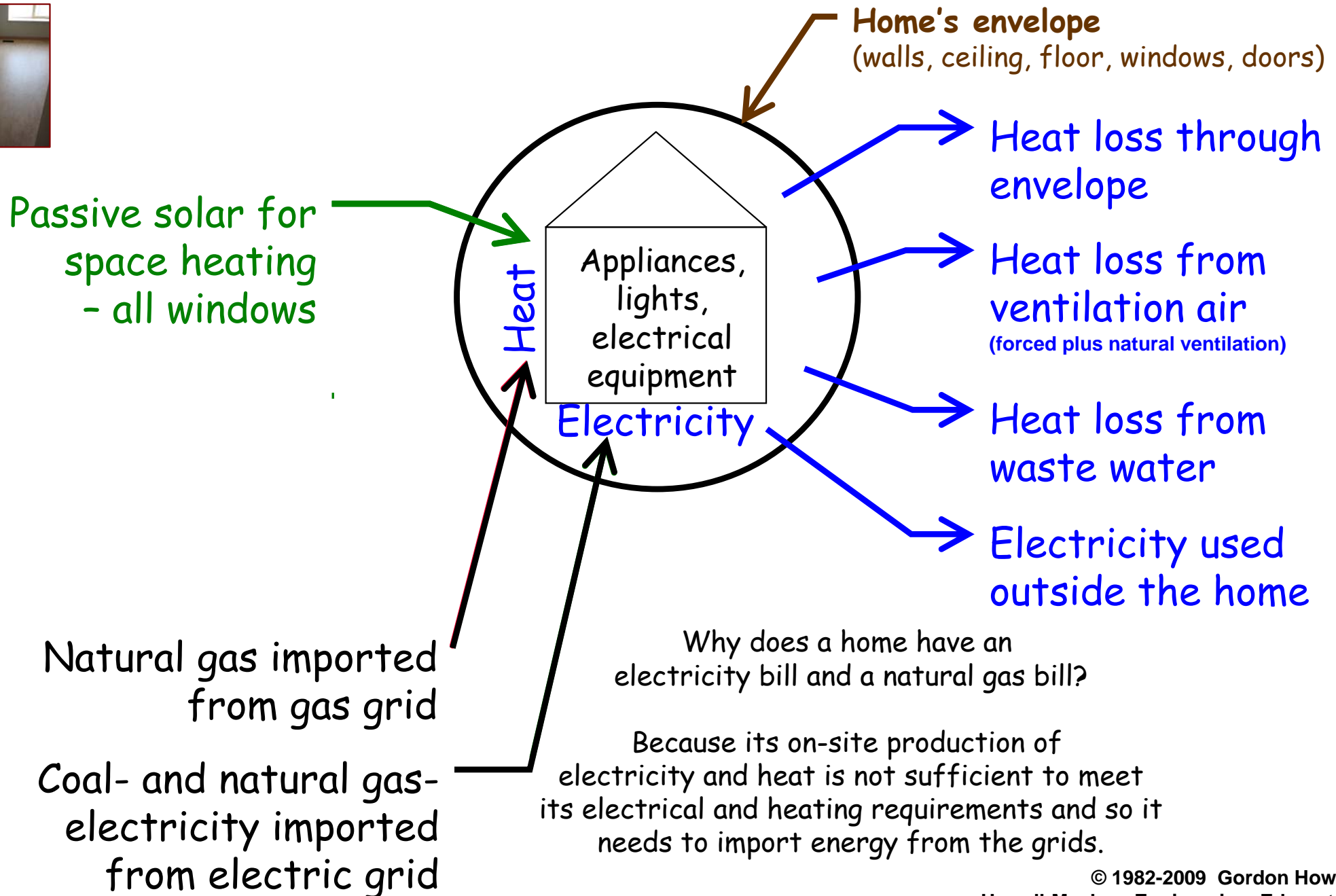
- We need large amounts of energy efficiency and large amounts of renewable energy



# House Envelope Affects Everything Else



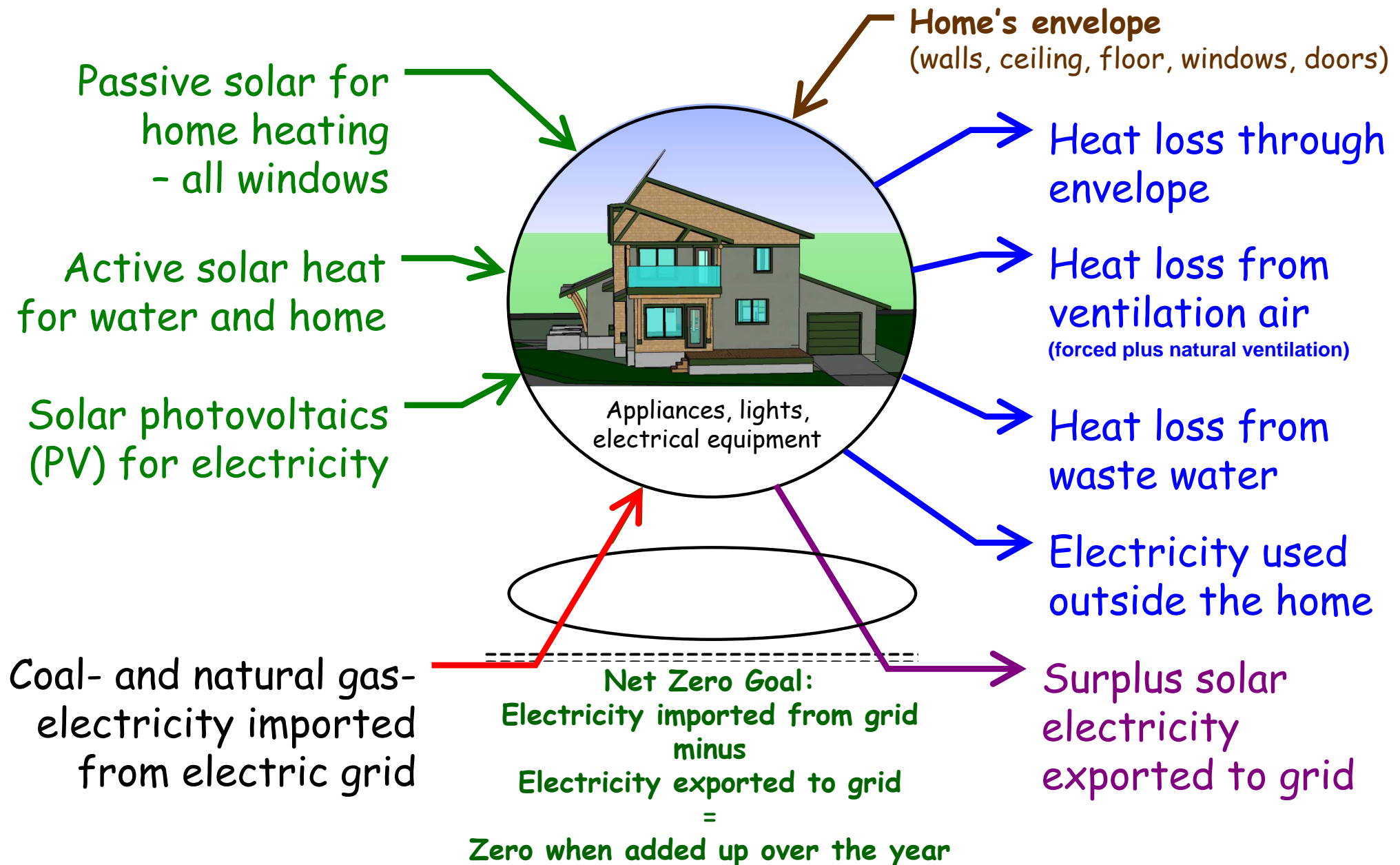
# Energy Flows – Standard Home





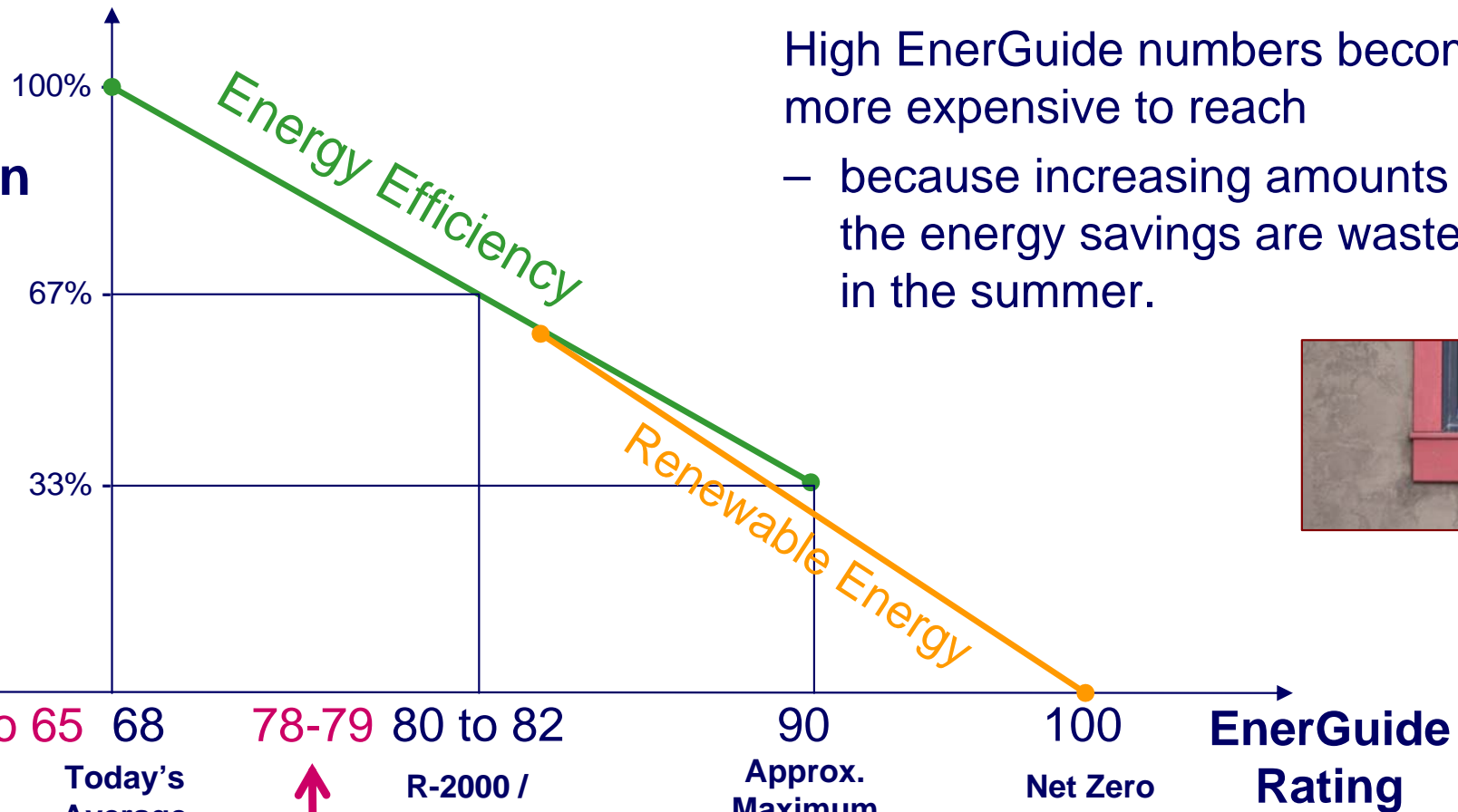


# Energy Flows – Riverdale NetZero Home



# Efficiency & Renewables to Get to Net Zero

**Energy Consumption**  
(% compared to average new construction)



High EnerGuide numbers become more expensive to reach

- because increasing amounts of the energy savings are wasted in the summer.

55 to 58



1970s homes

62 to 65



1990s homes

68

Today's Average New Housing

78-79



Built Green Gold

80 to 82

R-2000 / EnergyStar Performance – 1/3 reduction

90

Approx. Maximum Performance with Efficiency Alone – 2/3 reduction

100

Net Zero Energy Performance

**EnerGuide Rating**

**ecoENERGY**



Natural Resources Canada

Ressources naturelles Canada



**ENERGUIDE FOR NEW HOUSES**

**Canada**



# The Journey to Net Zero Energy

## - cheapest to most expensive

- **Electrical fixtures and appliances – electrical**
- **Water fixtures and appliances – water**
- **Building envelope – heating**
- } **Ultra-high efficiency technologies**
- 
- **Passive solar space heating...???**
- **Active solar liquid for domestic water heating...???**
- **Active solar liquid for space heating...???**
- **Active solar air for space heating...???**
- **Heat pump: ground, air, water...???**
- **Solar photovoltaic heating: heated air, electricity...???**
- } **Heating technologies**
- 
- **Solar photovoltaics...???**
- **Microwind...???** (probably not in urban settings)
- } **Electricity technologies**
-

# #1. Domestic Electricity



Fridge



Clothes dryer



Dishwasher

- Electricity consumption reduced by **50%**  
for an upgrade cost of **\$1800 (est)**
  - Energy efficient appliances, ECM ventilation motors
  - Energy efficient lighting (compact fluorescent, LEDs)
  - Task lighting (halogen)
  - Daylighting
  - Phantom load control
- Annual savings: \$550 (4600 kWh est.,  
4200 kg of emissions)
- Energy price: **1.6 ¢/kWh = \$4.50 /GJ (25 years)**  
(simple)
- Return on Investment: 30% /year  
(simple) (= ~3 year payback)



Light  
Emitting  
Diode  
(LED)  
lighting



CF  
lighting



# #2. Domestic Water Heating

- Fuel consumption for water heating reduced **75%**  
for an upgrade cost of **\$1750**
  - Water efficient shower heads, faucets, dishwasher, clothes washer
  - Drain water heat recovery
- Annual energy savings: 6200 kWh  
46,000 DHW litres  
1500 kg of emissions  
\$260
- Energy price: **1.1 ¢/kWh = \$3.10 /GJ (25 years)**  
(simple)
- Return on Investment: 15% /year  
(plus additional savings in water volume too)



Shower heads and faucets



Dish washer



Clothes washer



# #3. Energy Efficiency – the most important part

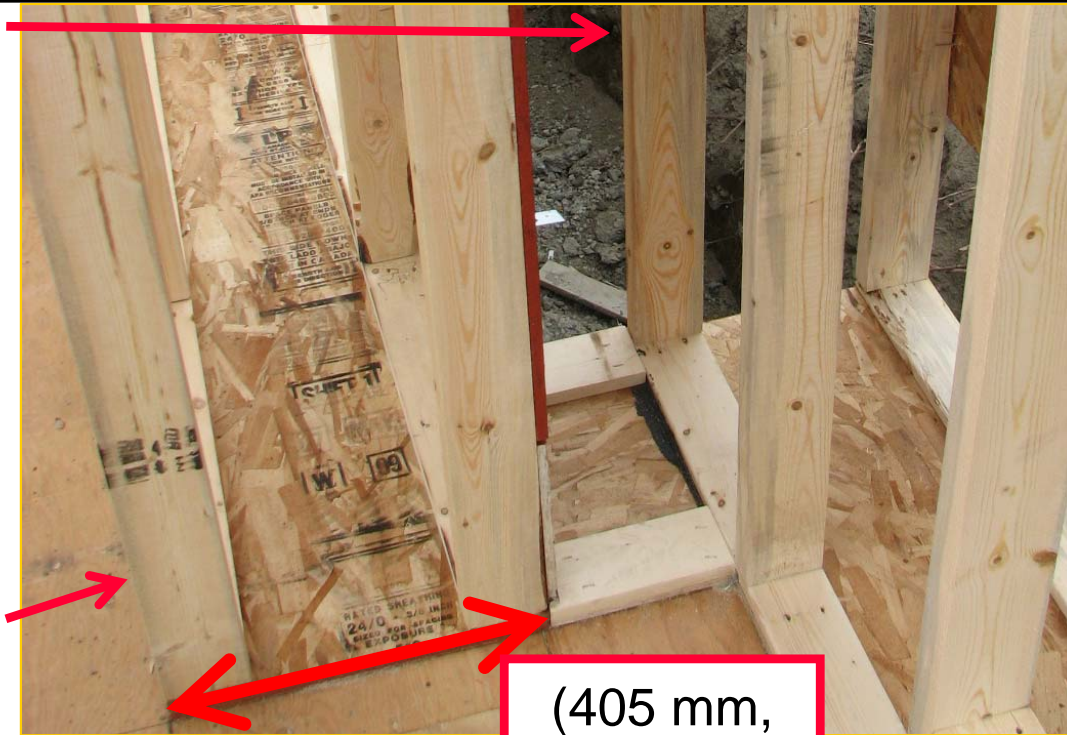
	<u>Riverdale NZE</u>	<u>90s house</u>	<u>70s house</u>
Wall construction:	<b>double 2x4</b>	single 2x6	single 2x4
<u>Insulation:</u>			
– ceiling:	<b>R-100</b>	R-28 to 34	<b>R-12</b>
– walls:	<b>R-56</b>	R-20	<b>R-8</b>
– basement walls:	<b>R-54</b>	R-8 (upper part)	<b>nothing</b>
– basement floor:	<b>R-24</b>	nothing	<b>nothing</b>
Windows:	<b>3-glazed (S, E, W) 4-glazed (N) low-e, argon gas</b>	2-glazed	<b>2-glazed</b>
Air leakage rate:	<b>0.5 AC/hour</b>	4 to 6 AC/hour	<b>5 to 7 AC/hour</b>
Ventilation system:	<b>with heat recovery 80% efficient</b>	none	<b>none</b>

Outside of wall

# Wall Construction and Insulation

- Double-stud 2x4
  - Easily able to be reproduced by home builders
  - 400 mm thick

Inside of wall

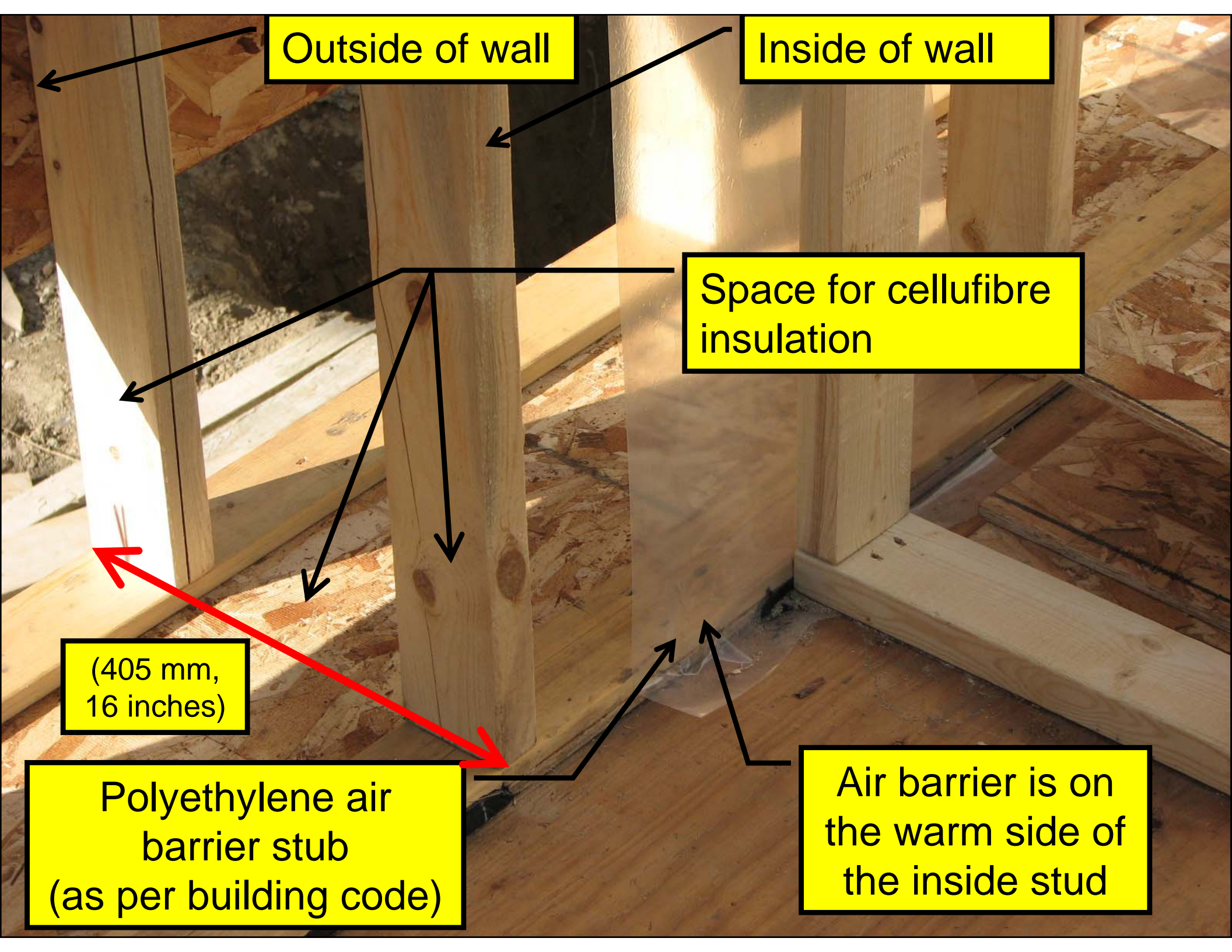


(405 mm,  
16 inches)

- Cellulibre insulation
  - Recycled newspapers
  - Low embodied energy
  - Locally produced
  - Sequestered carbon
  - Not a hydrocarbon product
  - R-59 value for insulation alone
  - R-56 overall wall value (including thermal bridging)







Outside of wall

Inside of wall

Space for cellulibre insulation

(405 mm,  
16 inches)

Polyethylene air  
barrier stub  
(as per building code)

Air barrier is on  
the warm side of  
the inside stud





R-54 wall value

This image shows a cross-section of a window wall assembly. On the left is a vertical wooden stud. To its right is a thick layer of yellow insulation. Further right is a vertical white foam strip. To the right of that is another layer of yellow insulation. On the far right is a vertical wooden stud and a window frame. Red arrows point from text labels to these components: a double-headed arrow for the total R-value, an arrow to the 50% fly-ash concrete (the rightmost stud), an arrow to the expanded polystyrene (the white foam strip), an arrow to the isocyanurate (the yellow insulation layer), and an arrow to the space for cellulose (the gap between the left stud and the first yellow layer).

50% fly-ash  
concrete

Expanded  
polystyrene  
insulation (R8)

Isocyanurate  
Insulation (R13)

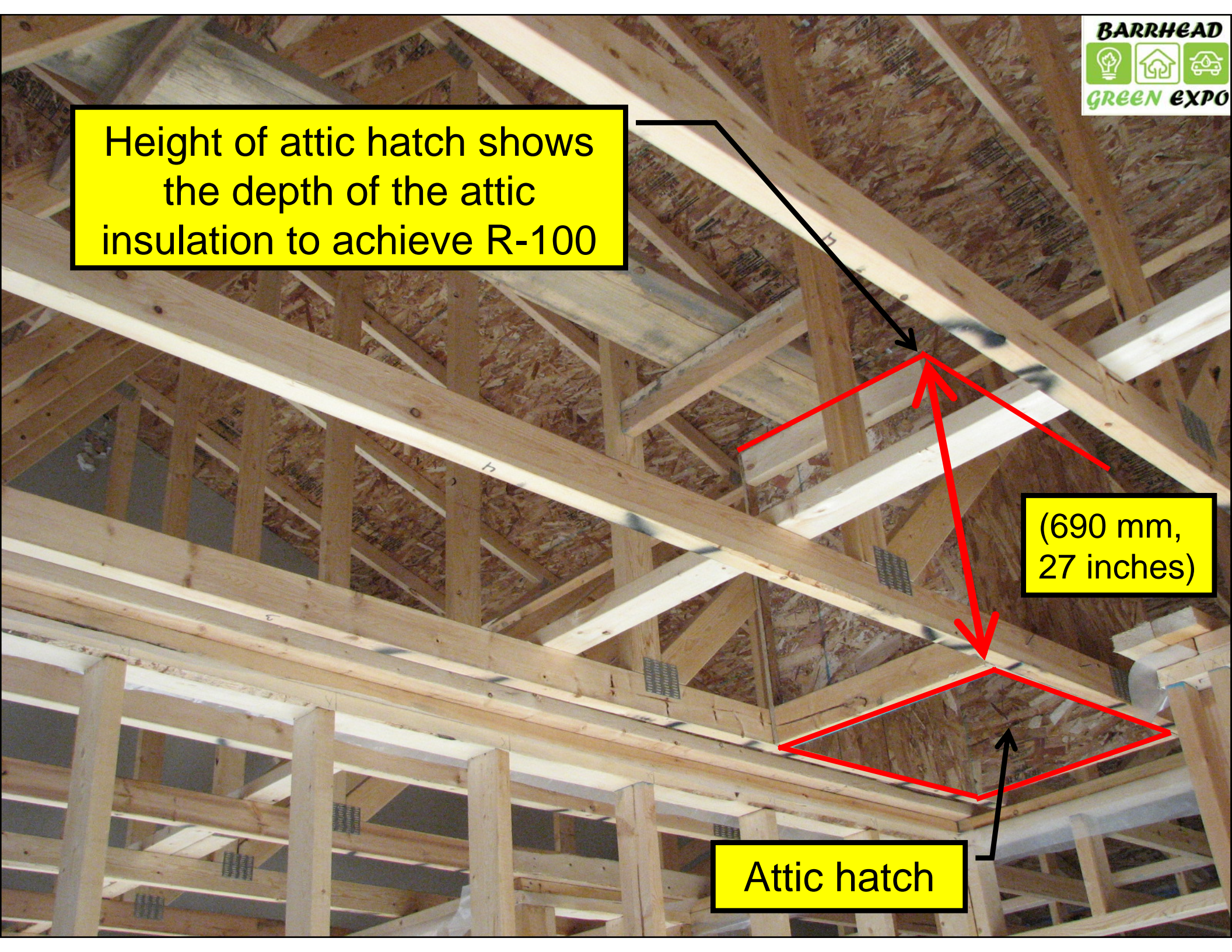
Space for cellulose insulation (R33)



Height of attic hatch shows  
the depth of the attic  
insulation to achieve R-100

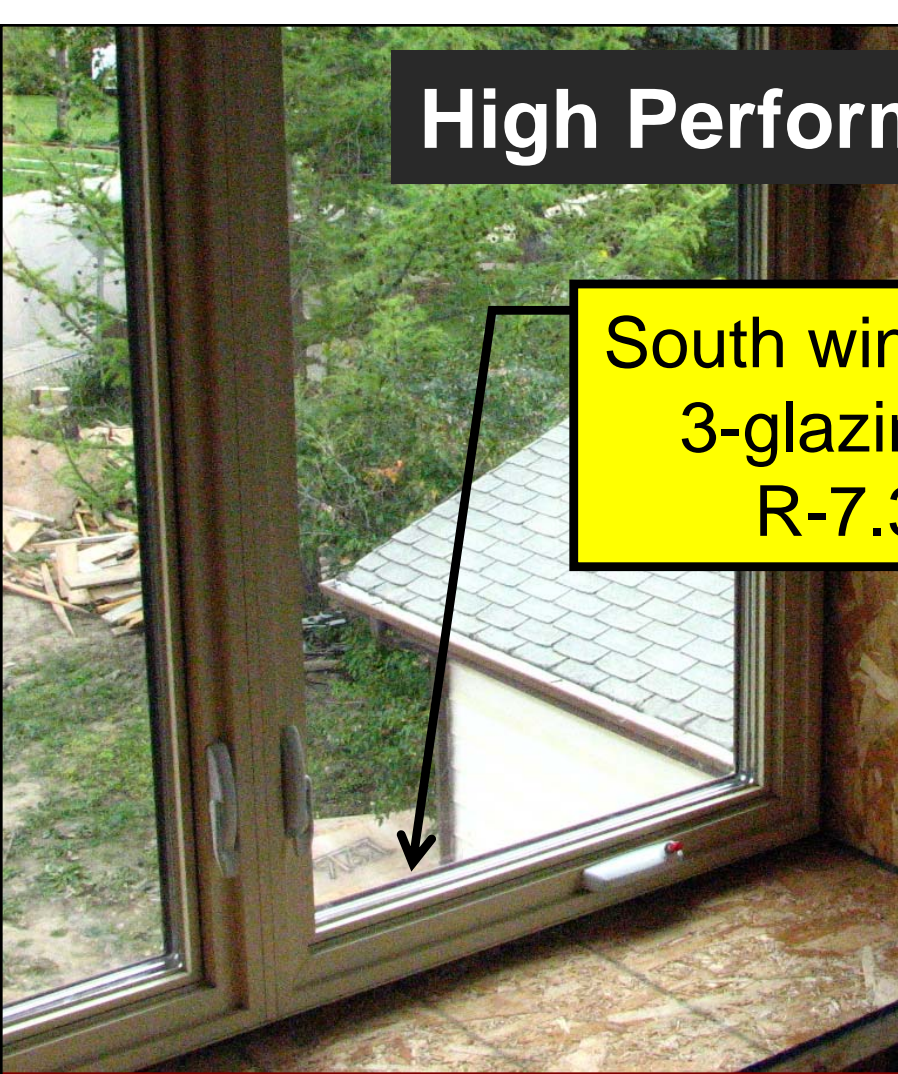
(690 mm,  
27 inches)

Attic hatch

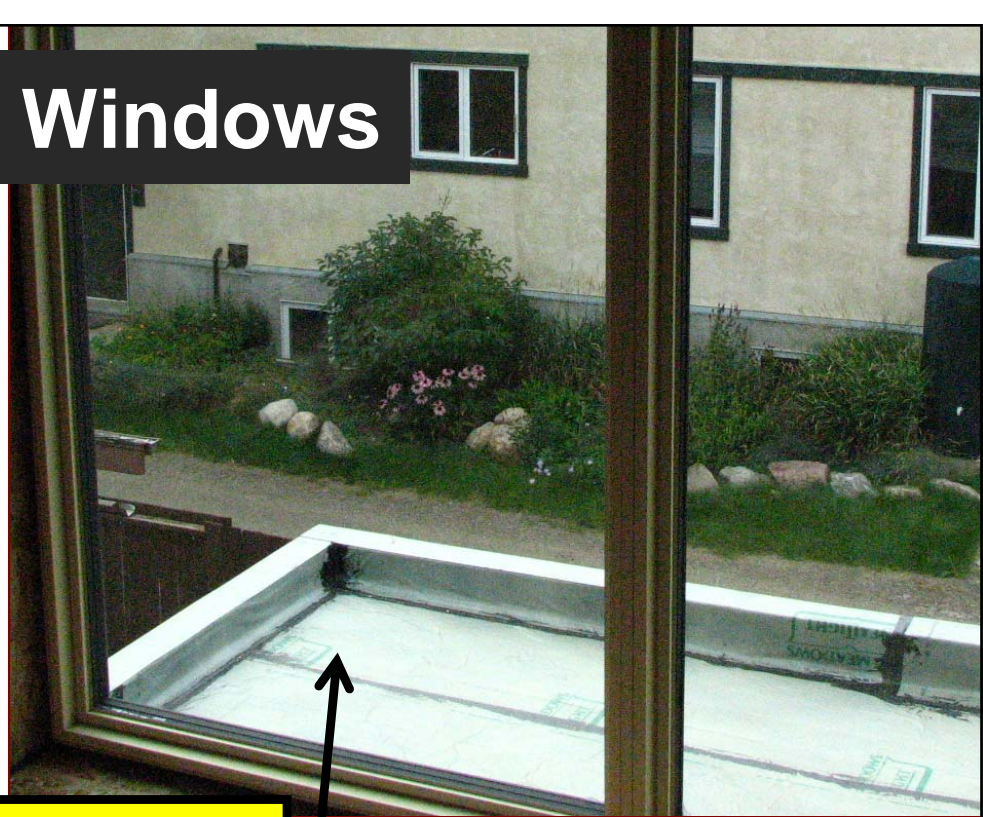





# High Performance Windows



South windows  
3-glazings  
R-7.3



East/west  
windows  
3-glazings  
R-8.3



North windows  
4-glazings  
R-10

- Soft-coat low emissivity coatings
- Argon gas between the glazings
- “Warm edge” spacer
- Insulated fibreglas frames
- Manufactured by Duxton, Winnipeg

# Results: Heat Loss at Winter Design Conditions



	<u>Riverdale NZE</u>	<u>90s house</u>	<u>70s house</u>
Floor area:	1844 ft <sup>2</sup>	1500 to 1800	1500 to 1800
Heat loss at -32°C:	6.6 kW (22,400 BTU/h)	20 to 26 kW (70,000 to 90,000)	29 to 35 kW (100,000 to 120,000)
# of 4-slice toasters to heat the house at -32°C at night	4 (or 6 hair dryers)	12 to 15 (18 to 22)	17 to 21 (24 to 30)
EnerGuide rating: (building envelope efficiency)	86	62 to 65 (Built Green Gold = 78, 79) (R-2000 = 80 to 82)	55 to 58



# #3. Building Envelope

- Fuel consumption for space heating reduced by **70%** for an upgrade cost of **\$12,000**
- Annual savings: 25,000 kWh  
5900 kg of GHG reductions  
\$1000
- Energy price: (over 50 years)  
(simple) **0.9 ¢/kWh = \$2.60 /GJ**
- Return on Investment: 9% /year



Ceiling R-100  
cellulose



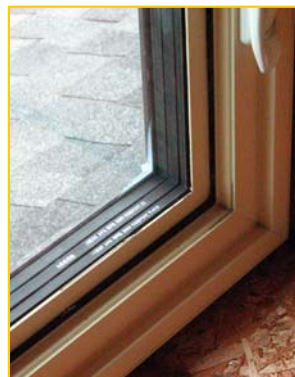
Double-stud  
2x4 walls with  
R-56 cellulose



Basement walls R-54



South  
windows  
R-7.3  
R-8.3



North  
windows  
R-10



Heat recovery  
ventilator  
80% efficient

Air tight  
envelope  
0.59 AC/h



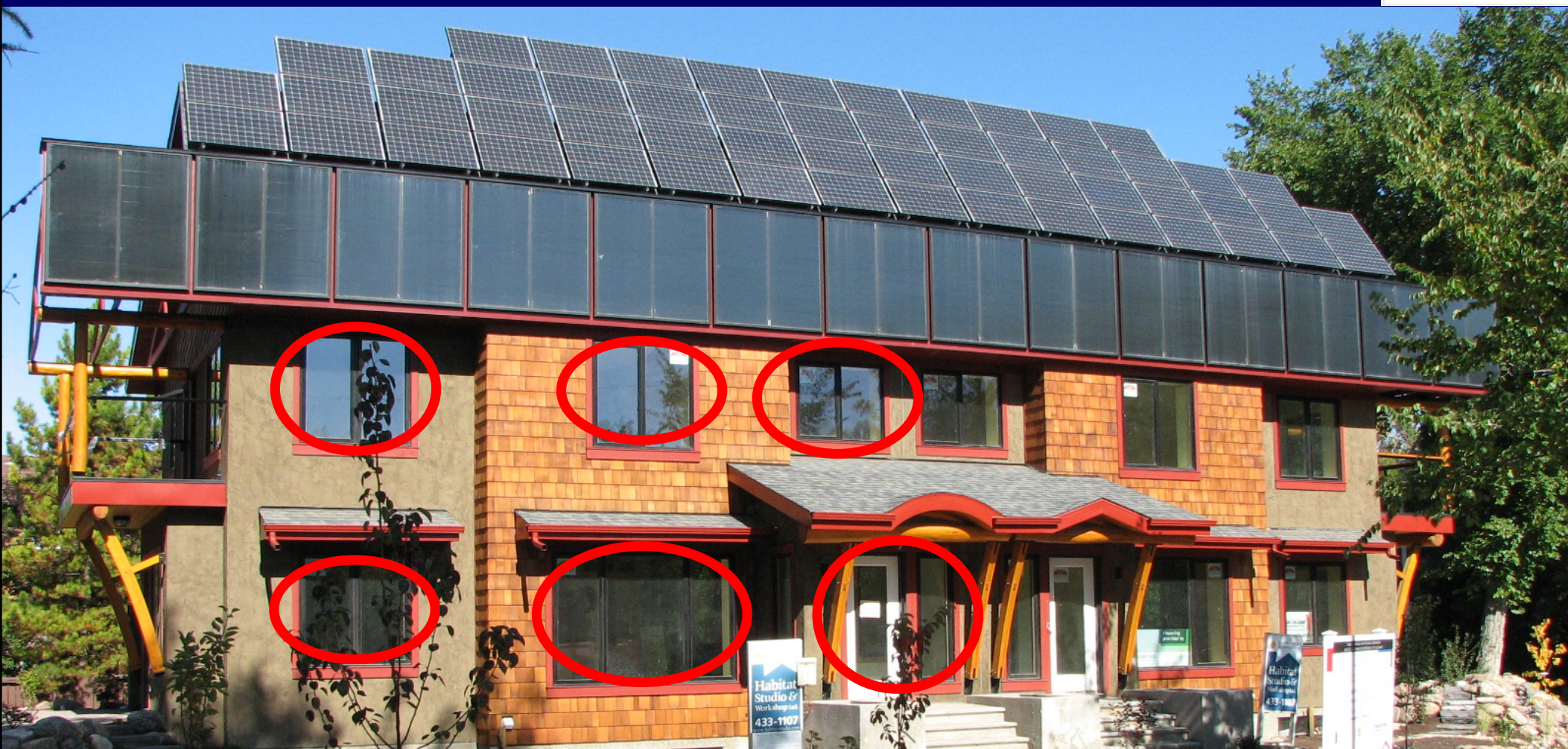
## #4. Passive Solar Heating

- 16.9 m<sup>2</sup> of south glazing  
= 10% of floor area
- Provides daylight to further reduce electricity consumption
- 20,000 kg thermal mass
  - Feature wall
  - Concrete counter tops
  - Extra drywall
- Provides 40% of space heating
- EnerGuide rating: **93**  
(electricity efficiency, passive solar)





## #4. Passive Solar Space Heating



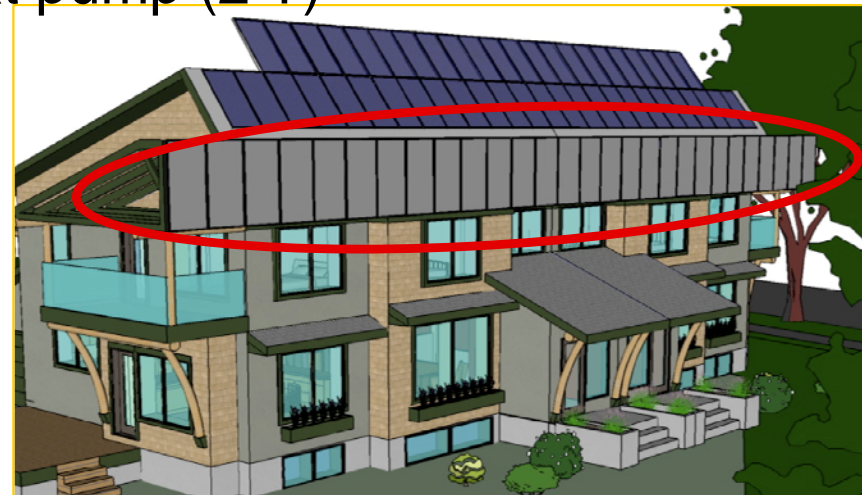
Upgrade cost:	\$2,400 for additional concrete mass
Annual value of passive solar heat:	4400 kWh est.
	1000 kg of GHG reductions
	\$185

Economics are integrated with building envelope & not easy to determine (yet)



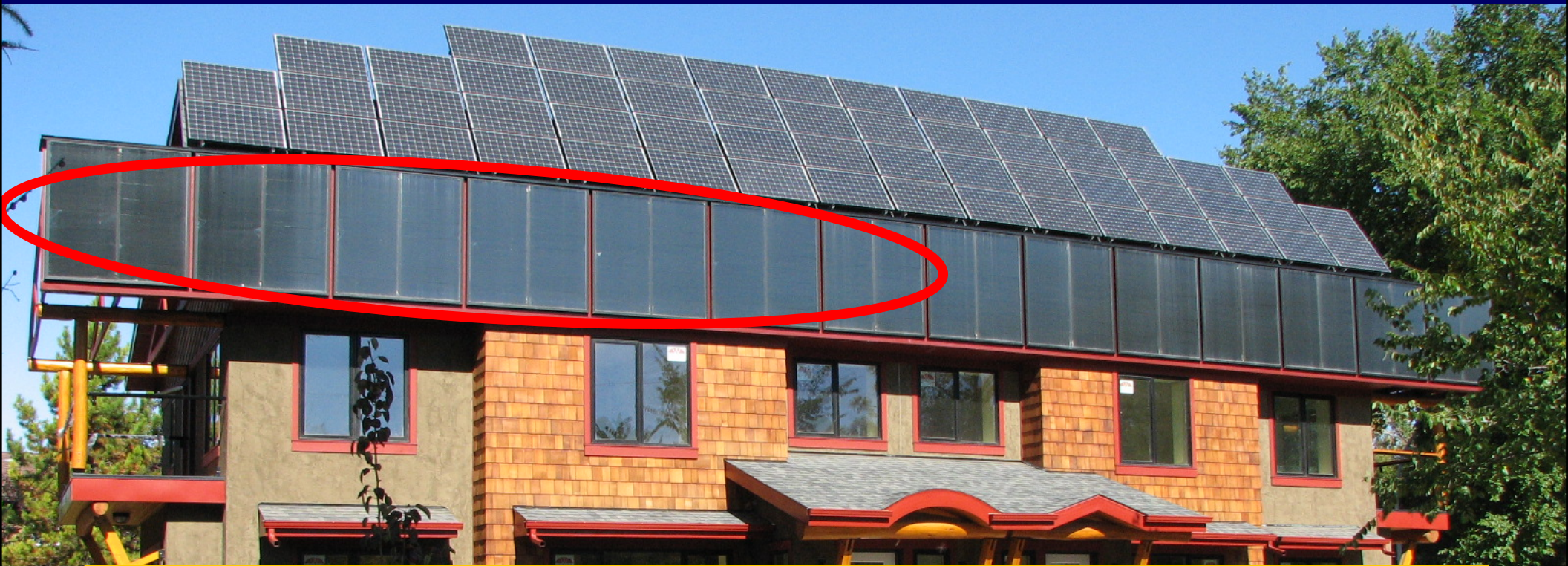
# #5. Active Solar Thermal Space and Water Heating

- 7 Zen collectors (21 m<sup>2</sup>)
  - high-efficiency flat-plate collectors
  - mounted on a vertical tilt
    - to maximise winter solar gain
    - to eliminate snow cover
    - to maximise reflected solar energy
- 300 litres – hot water storage – water heating  
+ 17 000 litres – warm water storage in basement – home heating
- Drainback system – water-based
  - does not use glycol
- May include a very small solar-assist heat pump (2 T)
- Provides 83% of domestic water heating and 21% of space heating
- EnerGuide rating: 96





# #5. Active Solar Thermal Space & Water Heating



Upgrade cost:	\$36,700 (net of \$5k of “learning” we made)
Annual savings:	4150 kWh
	1000 kg of GHG emissions
	\$582 (including \$400 savings from no gas line at 2008 prices)
Energy price (simple):	<b>26 ¢/kWh = \$71 /GJ (25 years)</b>
Return on Investment:	1.6% /year

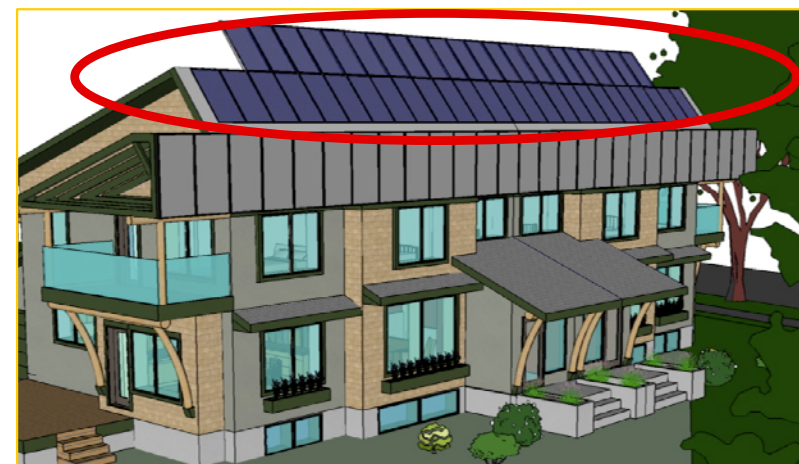


# #6. Solar Electric Power System

called “photovoltaics” or PV

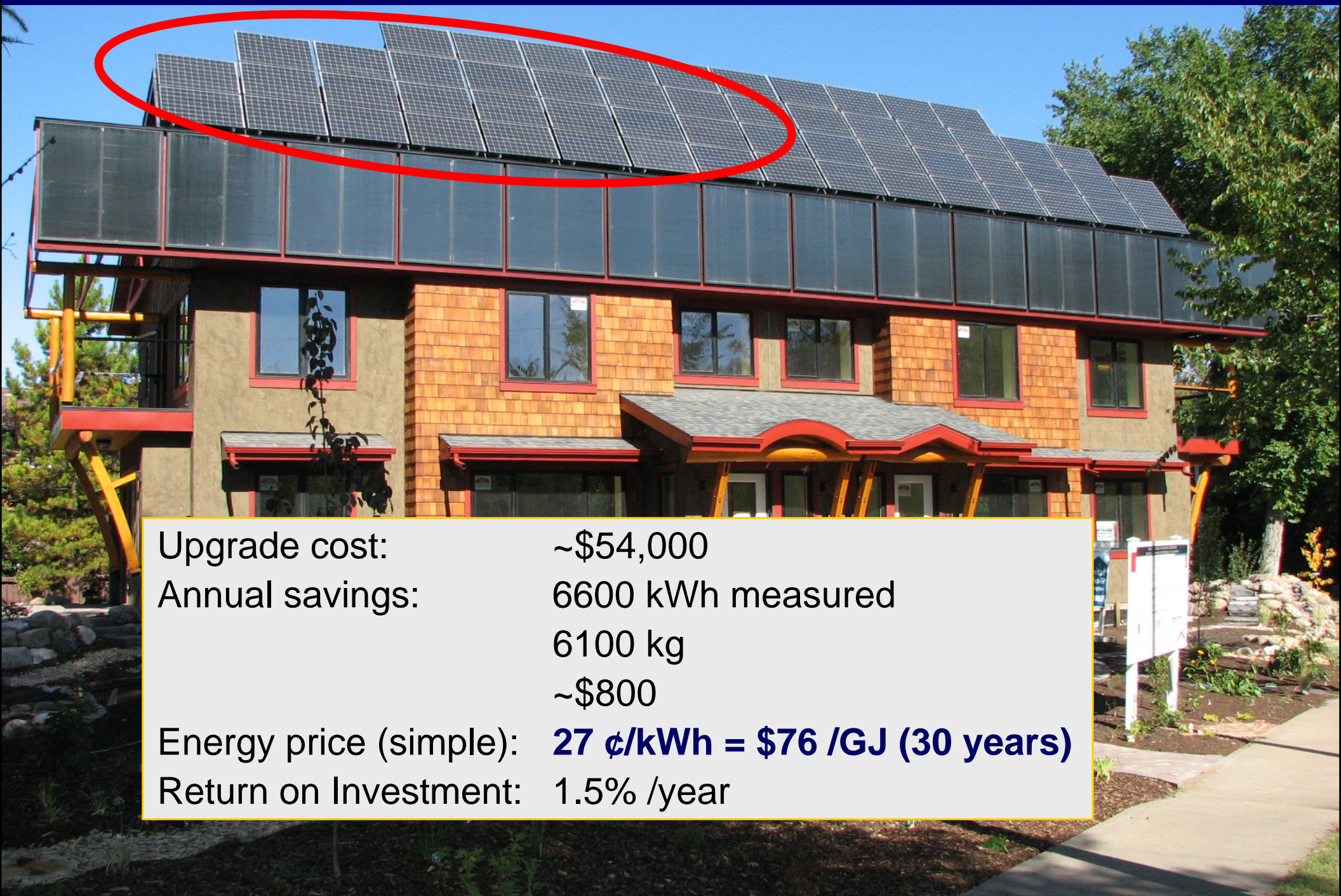


- 28 Sanyo high efficiency (17%) 200 W PV modules (Japan)
  - 33 m<sup>2</sup>, 5600 W in bright sunshine
  - Solar array mounted at 53° tilt to minimise snow cover, and maximise annual electricity production
- SMA Sunny Boy 6000W grid-dependent inverter (Germany)
- No battery bank
- Exports to grid every day of the year (even cloudy days)
- Provides 6% of domestic water heating, 11% of space heating and 112% of electricity consumption
- EnerGuide rating: **100.4** (surplus of 620 kWh/year)





## #6. Solar PV for Domestic & Deficit Heating Electricity



Upgrade cost: ~\$54,000

Annual savings: 6600 kWh measured

6100 kg

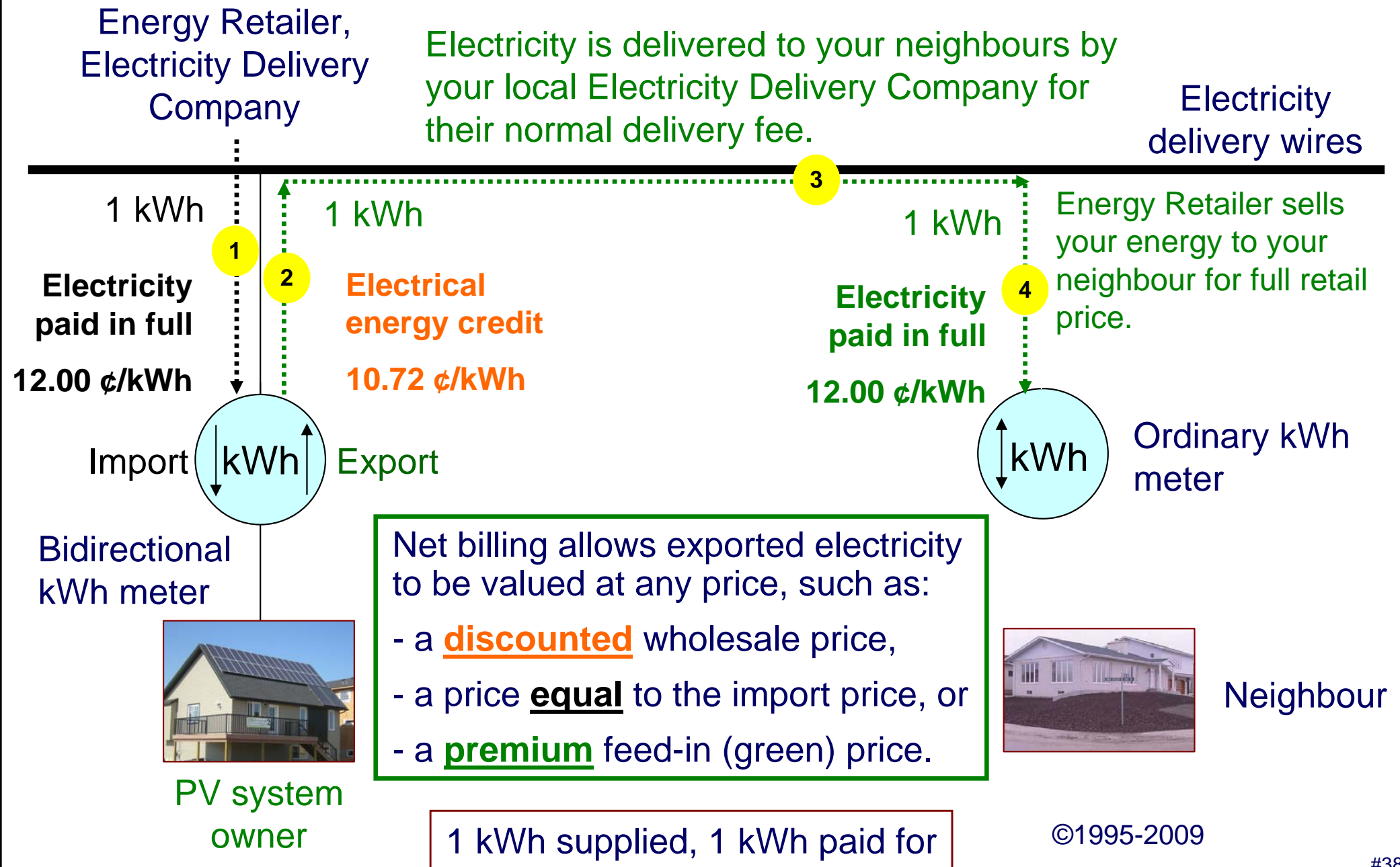
~\$800

Energy price (simple): **27 ¢/kWh = \$76 /GJ (30 years)**

Return on Investment: 1.5% /year

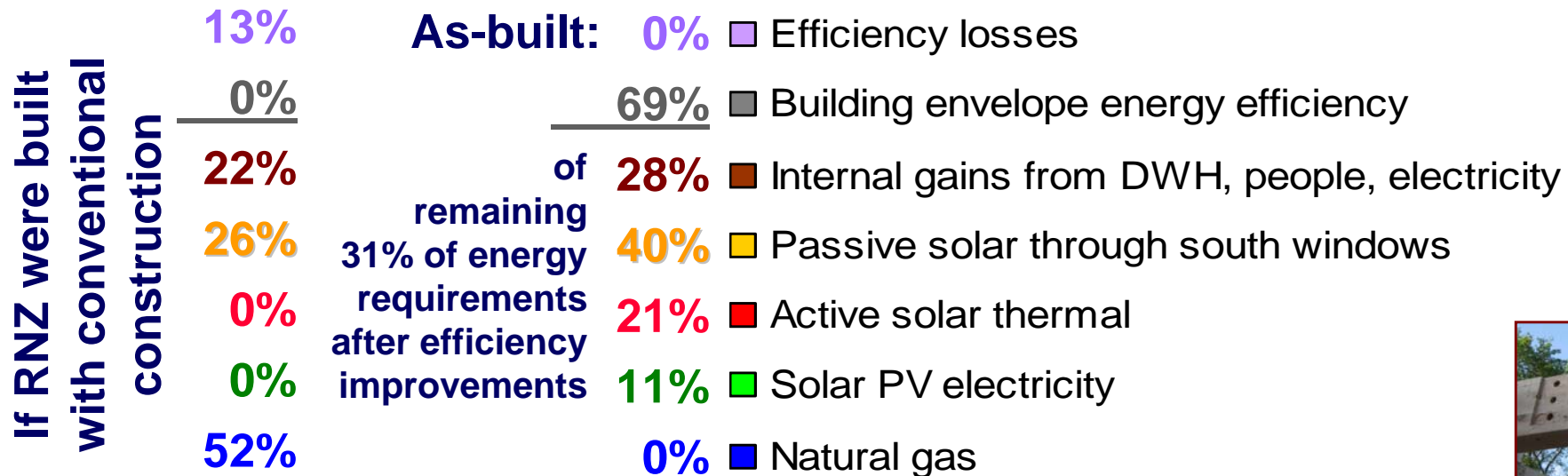
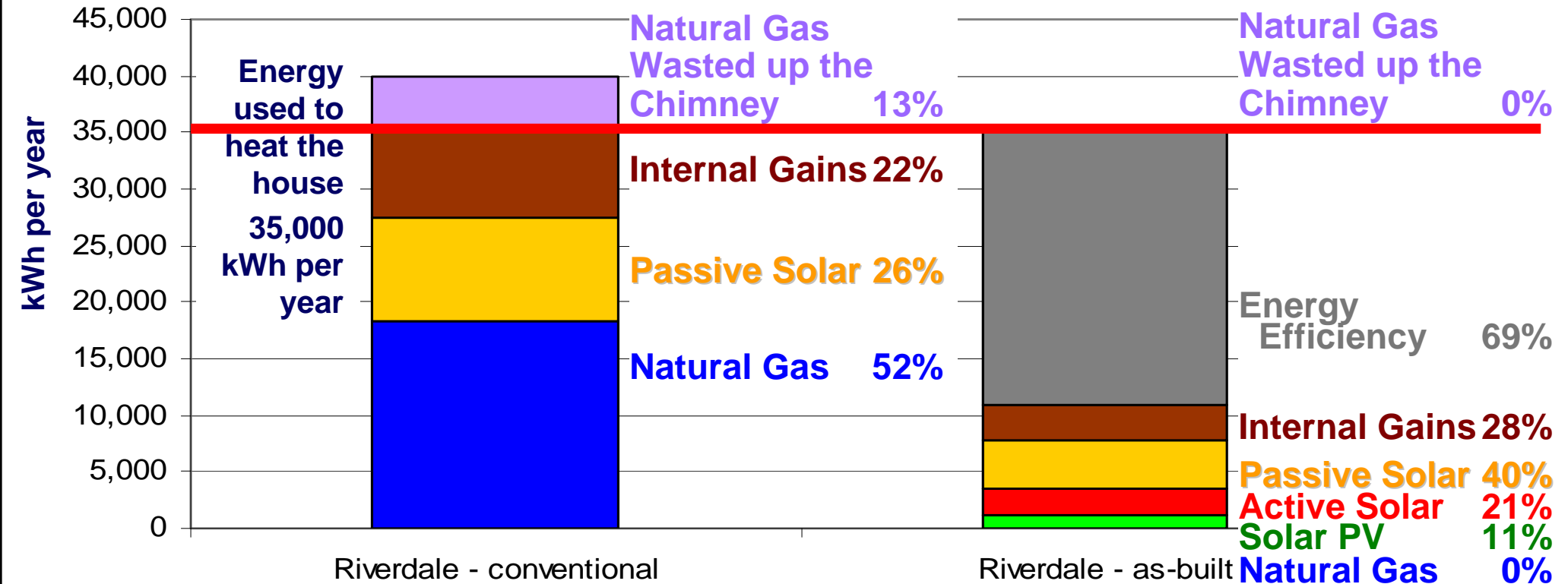


# How does Alberta's net billing work?

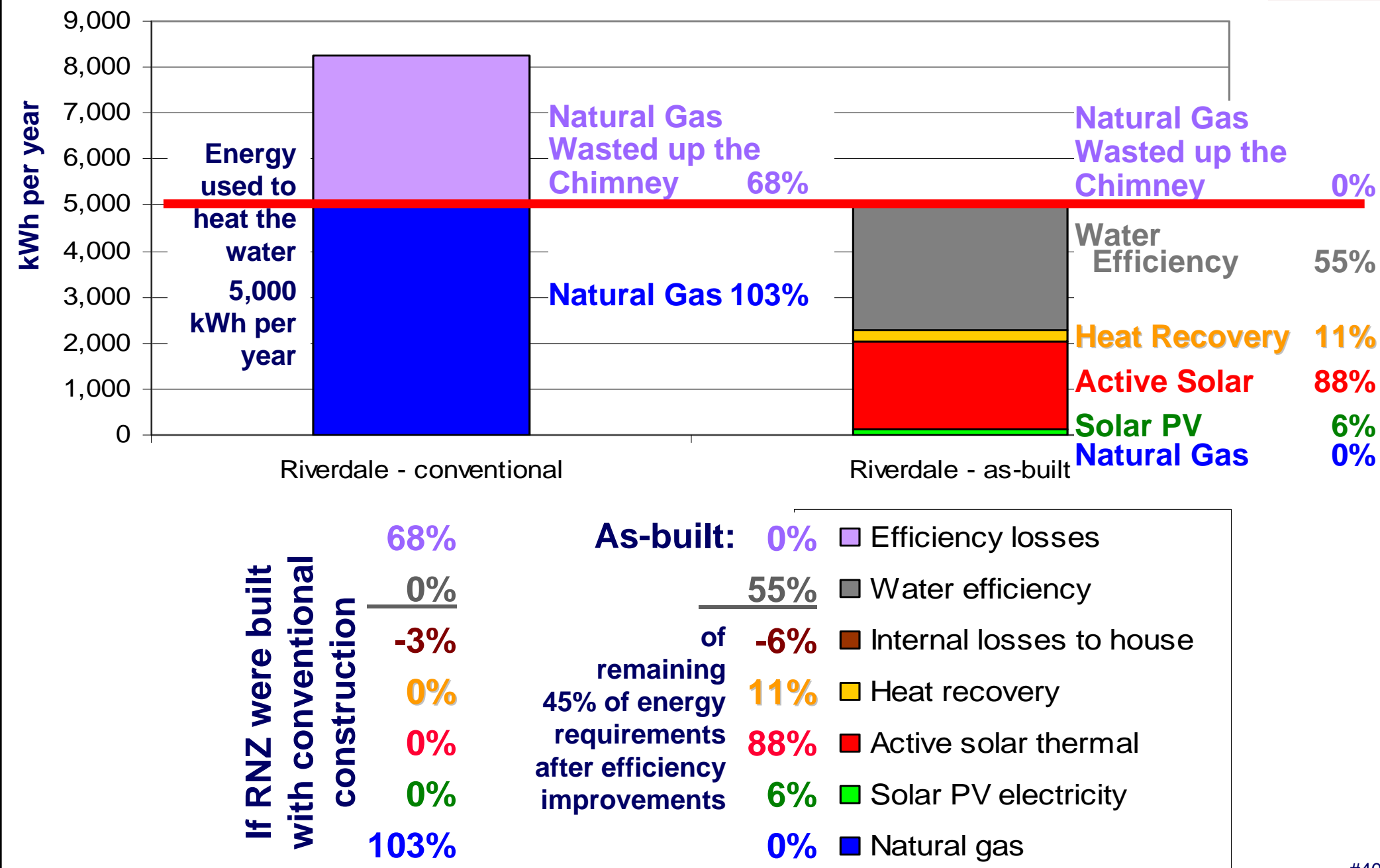




# Source of Energy – Space Heating



# Source of Energy – Water Heating



## Home heating bill

RNZ with conventional construction,  
reduced by passive solar and internal  
gains (people and electricity)

\$1070  
bill

Natural gas  
subscription fees  
= \$348 /year

### Heating efficiency

36% Internal gains  
savings (electricity and people)

\$722  
energy  
costs

\$688

44%

\$594

Passive solar  
heating

57%

\$457

Active  
solar  
heating

Solar  
PV

87%

\$109

\$137

100%  
\$0 bill

Supplementary  
heating:  
natural gas

gas

gas

elec

bill

## Water heating costs

Electricity  
subscription fees  
= \$214 /year

# Energy Bills

(2007 prices, to be updated)

Conventional  
home

Water efficiency  
+ Heat recovery

\$259  
energy  
costs

natural  
gas

76%

\$62

gas

95%

\$8

electricity

Solar  
PV

100%

\$0 costs

## Electricity bill

\$1226  
bill

\$1012  
energy  
costs

Conventional  
home

Electrical  
efficiency

42%

\$716

\$502

Solar  
PV

88%

\$140  
bill

-\$40

\$1.8k

\$40k

Costs: \$12k none \$2.4k \$26k \$12k

\$1.8k

\$10k

\$2k



# Economics of Combined Systems



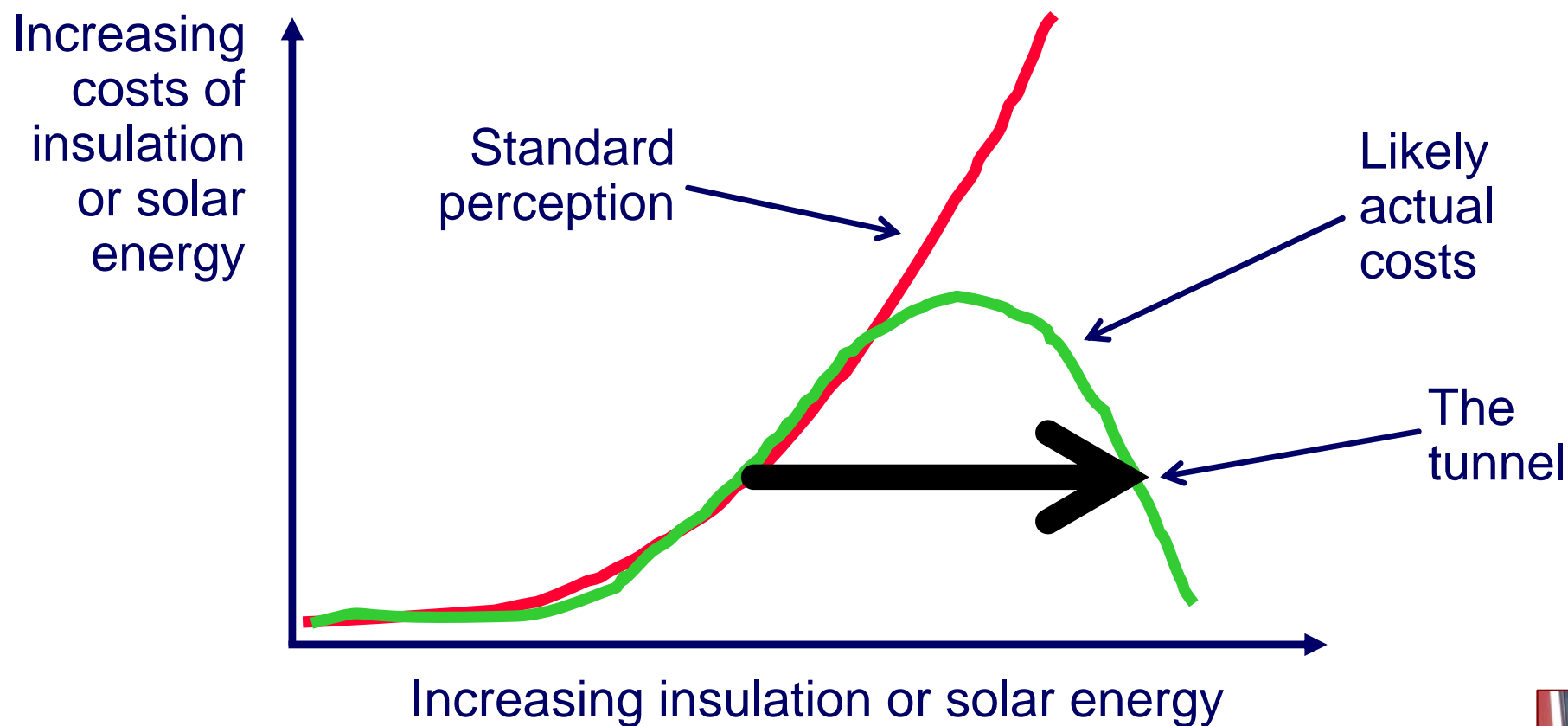
Upgrade cost:	\$113,000
Annual savings:	42,000 kWh ~18,000 kg \$3000
Energy price (simple):	<b>9 ¢/kWh = \$25 /GJ (30 years)</b>
Return on Investment:	2.7% to 12% /year depending on government policies on fossil-fuel subsidies, environmental emissions and green loans



# Economic Challenge

## – Tunnelling Through the Threshold...

- Diminishing returns... yes,  
but... there are cost reduction opportunities too...



Concept courtesy of Amory Lovins



# What have we learned so far?

1. Point-source heating works
  - No need for much of a heat distribution system!
2. Make the house “grey water ready”
  - To add in the future
3. Use more passive solar space heating
  - Make sure it is controlled well
4. Solar thermal space heating is much more complex than grid-connected solar PV.
5. Design, installation and controls for active solar space heating are quite complex.
6. Solar PV is very easy and flexible.
7. The price of energy from grid-connected solar PV is comparable to the price of energy from solar thermal space heating.



# Learned: Heating System...

- Standard, forced air heating system
- No furnace, uses a fan coil connected to the solar heating system
- BUT we don't (much) need to heat the rooms themselves... mostly all we need to do is heat the house!

Return air at outside of wall

Heat and air supply vents to centre of rooms

- Can do this because the walls and windows have such high R-values and so:
  - the walls and windows will be warmer; and
  - the rooms will need very small amounts of heat.





# Learned: Optimum PV tilt angle?

2008 December 30, 12h47, -20°C



- At 53° tilt, the PV system generated 13% more energy than expected from 2008 February to November. When in 2008 December and 2009 January it was largely covered with snow and produced ½ of what was expected, it didn't matter because we already had generated sufficient energy for the year.
- We will consider making the PV array at a steeper tilt... the compromise is less snow cover in the winter, but also likely less generation in the summer.



# Designed: PV Array Electrical Configuration

2009 January 15



- The PV array was wired in 4 sets of “strings” of 7 PV modules each.
- The electrical configuration of the strings was set up to allow the upper strings to continue to generate electricity even though the bottom string may be covered with snow.

# Designed: Once in a while solar doesn't work

2008 November 20, 19:26



- Of course, when the big light in the sky turns off, the solar production systems don't work – passive solar, active solar and solar PV – so instead we draw electricity from the electric grid, and draw heat from the solar storage tanks.



# Designed: How about Cooling?

- Our climate presents us with very small cooling requirements...
  - There are also 8 designs that keep the house cool.
- Passive cooling:
  - **Ultra-insulated walls** that keep out the heat energy caused by the solar radiation incident on the outside of the house,
  - **Ultra-insulated windows** that keep out the heat energy also,
  - **Overhangs** on the south windows to shade the windows from high summer sun angles,
  - Low **solar heat gain coefficient** (tinting) on east and west windows,
  - **Ventilation** through openable windows.
- Active cooling:
  - Circulating water through the **ground loops** under garage and next to foundation to provide a small amount of cooling to the fan coil,
  - Circulating water through the **solar thermal collectors** at night to provide cooled water to the fan coil,
  - Last resort: using the **solar-assist heat pump** to further chill the water from the ground loops.



# What we did not use...

- Insulated Concrete Forms (ICF)
  - great technology and products,
  - more expensive than double-stud 2x4 wall,
  - does not give us the R-value we need,
  - very high embodied energy consumption and emissions uses in manufacturing.
  
- Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs)
  - great technology and products,
  - more expensive than double-stud 2x4 wall,
  - more difficult to air seal than double-stud 2x4 wall,
  - is a hydrocarbon product.



# What we did not use...

- Radiant Floor Heating
  - very comfortable heat delivery system,
  - more expensive than low-speed forced air heating,
  - not necessary in a net zero energy house – don't have to distribute much heat around the house;
  - do not see the advantage in a net zero energy house.
  
- Window Shutters (inside or outside)
  - technology not as well developed as we would like,
  - concerns with:
    - condensation,                      air sealing,
    - rattling in the wind,              effective R-value,
    - cost,                                      durability,
    - would they be used consistently.

# What we did not use...

- Evacuated Tube Solar Collectors (ETC)
  - great technology and products,
  - more expensive than flat-plate collectors,
  - is performance as high as claimed?,
  - concerned about durability.
  
- Geothermal Heat Pump (GTHP)
  - great technology and products,
  - was a possibility for this house,
  - did consider it,
  - installed purchase costs and operating costs are a factor,
  - could be a good option if we did not have an active solar space heating system.

# What we did not use...

- Heating zones
  - this heating system configuration works well
  - this is used in very energy in-efficient houses to reduce heating costs
  - this is not needed in an ultra-efficient house
  
- Night set-back thermostat
  - this is used in energy in-efficient houses to reduce heating costs
  - likely not enough energy could be saved in a net zero house to make this worthwhile



# Why use expensive electricity instead of cheap natural gas?

- If we supplied our backup heat from natural gas, we would only need 4.9 GJ worth of heat, which would mean we would need to burn 5.3 GJ of natural gas to get this heat.
- This would cost us:
  - \$50 for the gas (= \$44 to heat the house and \$6 to heat the water)
  - plus \$400 for the annual service charges (in 2008)
  - for a total of \$450 per year.
- Natural gas:
  - cost is \$450 for 4.9 GJ of heat = \$91 / GJ
- Electricity:
  - cost is \$165 for 4.9 GJ of heat at \$33 / GJ

In this case, electricity is less expensive than natural gas because of the large gas connection fees.

# Barriers and Opportunities

– where policies need to facilitate change instead of blocking change...

- **Value** the environment
- **Allow** full cost recovery of all electricity fed into the grid
- **Value** Canada's solar industrial capacity
- **Mandate** full-cost accounting for all energy sources
- **Remove** fossil fuel subsidies
- **Require** fossil fuels to pay for their environmental damage
- **Provide** ultra-low interest green loans for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects



# What can you do?

## – Becoming Ready for NetZero in a New House

- Make your house as energy efficient and solar friendly as possible!
- House orientation
  - roof lines from SW to SE
- Amount of solar collection area
  - Area of south windows, roof
  - Roof tilt angle
- Landscaping
  - Well-placed trees, deciduous trees on the south
- Space from basement to attic
  - Conduit for electrical cables
  - "Chase" for 2 solar hot water pipes





# What can you do?

## – Energy Efficiency in an Existing House

- Make your house as energy efficient as possible!
- Get an energy audit done on your house – it is a roadmap of what can be done
  - See [www.energyexperts.ca](http://www.energyexperts.ca) and [www.atcoenergysense.com](http://www.atcoenergysense.com)
- Replace your incandescent light bulbs
- Replace your ancient fridge
- Change out your standard efficiency furnace to a high efficiency one



# What can you do?

## – Energy Efficiency in an Existing House

- Make your house as energy efficient as possible!
- **Lots** of energy information is available
  - “Keeping the Heat In” from CMHC
  - Energy Solutions Alberta ([www.energysolutionsalberta.com](http://www.energysolutionsalberta.com))
- Sustainable Materials
  - See Green Alberta ([www.greenalberta.ca](http://www.greenalberta.ca))
- Landscaping
  - See The Urban Farmer ([www.theurbanfarmer.ca](http://www.theurbanfarmer.ca))



# What can you do?

## – Solar Energy in an Existing House

- There is a lot of research and information already available for you.
- Tap the Sun passive solar design book from CMHC ([www.hme.ca/tapthesun](http://www.hme.ca/tapthesun))
- Canadian Solar Industries Association ([www.cansia.ca](http://www.cansia.ca))
- Eco-Solar Contacts and Services List for Alberta
  - download from [www.hme.ca](http://www.hme.ca)
  - lots of web sites on the internet





# Want to Learn More?

- Riverdale NetZero presentations, workshops, tours
  - [www.riverdalenetzero.ca](http://www.riverdalenetzero.ca)
  - send us your e-mail address so we can keep in touch with you.
- Mill Creek NetZero energy house
  - [www.greenedmonton.ca](http://www.greenedmonton.ca)
- Solar Energy Society of Canada – Northern Alberta Chapter
  - [www.solaralberta.ca](http://www.solaralberta.ca)
  - courses in solar power, solar heating, off-grid
- Eco-Solar Home Tour – June 6, noon to 5 pm
  - [www.ecosolar.ca](http://www.ecosolar.ca)
  - last time to see the Riverdale net zero house
- Much more is coming soon...



We welcome any  
feedback, questions,  
suggestions, comments  
and challenges to  
anything we present.

**...we hold the future in our hands**



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