

# Rain-delayed ‘green’ home nears completion



**A view from the Farrars' house, which overlooks Lake Hodges.**  
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**Editor's note:** Rhonda and Nigel Farrar are building a home near Escondido incorporating a host of environmentally friendly technologies. This is the latest installment in an occasional series about the Farrars' construction of their "green" home.

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**ESCONDIDO** — Last fall, Rhonda Farrar and her husband, Nigel thought that by this time they'd be comfortably established in their "green" home, being constructed just north of Lake Hodges.

The environmentally friendly house was unofficially expected to be completed by the end of the year. Then the rains came.

Rhonda Farrar, a financial planner by trade, got a new appreciation for how plans must bend before the weather's fickleness.

"We had to have three days of not raining to be able to seal the outside of the house," Farrar said on a site visit last Thursday. "And we did not have three days of no rain for an entire month. It didn't cause any damage inside, it just slowed us down."

With the return of drier weather, construction has resumed. On Thursday, workers applied a finish to the 3,000-square-foot house's second-story deck. Outside, a worker on a bulldozer prepared the land for the Farrars' "sustainable farm."

The farm is a critical part of the project's environmental credentials. The Farrars plan to grow various vegetables and fruits, the kinds you might find at a local organic food store. This will remove carbon dioxide from the air, balancing the production of CO<sub>2</sub> related to the home's energy

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use. This will make the property “carbon neutral.” Water for both farm and home will come from a well.

The Farrar home is also being constructed to be energy-neutral, producing as much energy as it uses. Electricity will come from solar panels, which will make enough power during the daytime to feed back into the utility grid.

“The only fossil fuel that we will use is natural gas for cooking and for the backup heat for the water heater,” Farrar said. “That little bit of gas will be way offset by the sustainable farm that we’ve planned for the house.”

Air conditioning will be provided with a geothermal pump that taps into the

underground ambient temperature of 70 degrees, year-round. The Kelix Thermacouple system being installed transfers heat between the home and the ground, through a closed-loop pipe system, which circulates a water-based fluid.

Farrar is now fixating on smaller milestones that indicate construction is nearing the end, such as the installation of doors, countertops, windows and cabinetry.

Walking through the home, Farrar points out what isn’t there: paint fumes. The paint, from Dunn-Edwards, doesn’t give off VOCs, or volatile organic compounds.

“It’s amazing to be in a house that’s all covered in paint, and there’s no smell of paints,” Farrar said. “It’s healthier for the painter, it’s healthier for us in the long run, and it’s beautiful.

“None of this is new. But when you put it all together, it results in a sustainable home, that in this case will be net zero-energy and carbon neutral. We will not be contributing to air pollution,” Farrar said.

Although the work is now proceeding again, Farrar said she’s not venturing any estimate of when the house will be completed.

“Our completion date is when it’s ready,” she said. “When the inspector signs off saying it’s done, then we’ll move in.”

For those who wish to incorporate green building techniques into their own home, the Farrars have put their plans, contractors and material sources online. Visit [www.farrargreenhome.org](http://www.farrargreenhome.org).

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