

Premier Issue  
June - July, 2026



# THE BUILDERS GUIDE

Coulee Region Edition



FEATURE ARTICLE:

*25 Years of Striving for Energy Efficiency*

## WHY THE BUILDERS GUIDE EXISTS

Couples rarely decide to build a new home in a single moment....

**But nearly every serious couple visits a lender to determine financing before selecting a builder.**

By placing a curated, high-quality publication in bank and credit union lobbies, The Builders Guide introduces families to local custom home builders while they are actively thinking about budgets, lifestyles and long-term choices. It allows them to see what is possible before they ever tour a resale home.

For home builders, this placement is uniquely powerful. It reaches prospective clients early, calmly, and without competition - at the exact point where decisions begin to form.

The Builders Guide is published three times per year and distributed exclusively through select financial institutions and professional waiting environments. Each edition features a limited group of builders selected to represent quality, craftsmanship, and regional leadership.



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# THE BUILDERS GUIDE

COULEE REGION EDITION

## Premier Issue

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*Builders: upgrade to a full page feature in the next issue*

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By Dmitri Alexander, THE BUILDERS GUIDE

## FEATURE

### When Wisconsin's *Focus On Energy* was part of the ENERGY STAR energy-efficiency movement

We recently visited with Paige and Joe Van Elzen of the firm of Thompson Homes, Inc., to get material for the Feature Article to run in our Winter Issue. With the cold, blizzardy months approaching, we felt it appropriate to focus on energy conservation and other factors which should be considered when planning the construction of a new home here in Wisconsin.

Having heard so much about the quality of homes built by Thompson Homes, their efficiency in conserving energy and venting problem-causing moisture, we asked Joe and Paige if

they could give us the real low-down on what they do to create such highly rated energy-efficient structures.

They graciously accepted our invitation to an interview, and called in Doug Meek, of the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes program, to join us.

"We decided a long time ago to join a program that offers so much - expertise, experience and credibility - for such a small investment", Joe told us. "For years we had been building homes that more than qualified for certification under the

Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes program - at least, we thought they did. Now it's great for us to have that independent verification that tells us we did everything right, and our clients have that Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes plaque that shows they have the best, most energy efficient home possible.



Joe Van Elzen, left, of Thompson Homes, Inc., checks air loss with Doug Meek, area representative of the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes Program, using special diagnostic equipment.

May 6, 2002

Dear Joe, Paige and everyone at Thompson Homes,  
Sorry it took us so long to say this, but  
THANK YOU!! This past February we had a  
severe winter storm which knocked out the power  
from 9:00 pm until 8:30 am the next day. We were  
worried that the cold weather would cause us to  
take our 8-week old child to a hotel in order to stay  
warm, but we didn't need to worry. You had built  
our house to be very energy efficient, and it paid  
off! Even though the weather outside was cold and  
windy, our house stayed nice and warm. In fact,  
it only dropped 4° over the entire time the power  
was off!

Thank you for putting everything you could  
into making our house both beautiful and energy  
efficient.

Todd, Bev. + Haley  
Schwantes

P.S. If anyone wonders about the benefits of extra  
insulation and sealants, have them talk to us.

Paige Thompson-Van Elzen proudly showed us a letter she and Joe had received last spring from a family that faced a power outage during a February blizzard. "Their thermostat only dropped 4 degrees during the entire twelve hours the power was out," said Paige, "and they were very, very happy that they didn't have to go to a hotel with their baby."

"That's no surprise to us" commented efficiency specialist Doug Meek. "We test hundreds of new homes built in this area, and those

## THE BUILDERS GUIDE



built by Thompson Homes consistently come in with ratings that fall into the top percentage of all the homes certified by the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes program." That's because Thompson Homes not only participates in the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes program, they also take advantage of all of the seminars



Joe and Paige Van Elzen, right, owners of Thompson Homes, Inc., go over construction plans with Doug Meek, area representative for Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes Program.

and educational opportunities the program offers its participating builders.

"These guys really know what the program is all about, and always go that extra step to make sure energy loss is at a minimum and that all the built-in systems in the house are working properly," Meek told us.

Joe took us into a basement where he pointed out the little details that pay off huge dividends when it comes to energy conservation. He noted how they spray urethane foam on all the box sills and use DC drive furnaces to lower your monthly operating costs. "We make our homes really airtight, and then get rid of moisture and add fresh air through an engineered ventilation system. The whole concept works best when leaks in the Building Envelope are eliminated," Joe informed us.

We saw switch and plug-in receptacles caulked and insulated, and huge amounts of insulating hardening foam used to seal areas where ducts

leave the house close to the basement ceiling. "These are areas of real concern," said Meek. "Joe doesn't miss them. All houses, no matter how well they're built, will experience some leakage due to wood shrinking and settling. But our tests show that Thompson Homes experience minimum leakage - even after a couple of years. The difference is in the details, in the dedication Paige and Joe have to giving their clients the best that the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR program and their own strict standards can give them."



Thompson Homes, Inc., makes sure moisture is removed from bathrooms using a ventilating system that is tested and certified by the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes Program.

Having witnessed the results of the various tests administered by Doug Meek on one Thompson Homes-built house, we can testify that Thompson Homes does indeed create homes of maximum energy efficiency... and of maximum beauty, we might add. ■

*(Reprinted from 2003)*

Reach prospective customers at the right place, and at the right moment: when they apply for financing.....

## Where Custom Home Decisions Actually Happen



In that moment:

- ⊗ **Budget is defined**
- ⊗ **Scope is discussed**
- ⊗ **Builder is selected**

# Before you Build: How to Choose the Right Lot For Your Dream Home

**D**esigning your dream home is exciting—but the success of that home begins long before you start construction. It starts with the land itself.

Choosing the right building lot isn't just about location—it's about how that land supports your vision, your budget & your long-term satisfaction.

## Location Still Matters Most

The old rule is true: location's everything. Consider:

- Proximity to work, schools, and daily services
- Area character & future development plans
- Property taxes and municipal services

A beautiful home in the wrong location can become a long-term regret.



## Understand The Land Itself

Not all lots are created equal. Key physical factors factors include:

- **Soil Conditions:** Poor soil can increase costs of foundations
- **Drainage:** Improper grading can lead to water issues
- **Topography:** Sloped lots can add cost—but also offer design opportunities
- **Access to Utilities:** Sewer, water, gas, and electric availability

A lot that looks affordable upfront can become expensive once site work begins.

## Zoning and Restrictions

Before purchasing, review:

- Local zoning regulations
- Building setbacks and height restrictions
- HOA or subdivision covenants

These rules can directly impact what, and how, you're allowed to build.

## Sunlight and Orientation

The direction your home faces affects both comfort and efficiency. South-facing exposure can increase natural light, improve passive solar heating, reduce long-term energy costs.

A well-oriented lot works with your home design, not against it.

## Think About the Lifestyle

Walk the property and ask yourself:

- Where will outdoor living spaces go?
- What will the views be from inside the home?
- How much privacy do you want?

The best lots support not just a house—but the way you want to live.

## Work With A Builder Early

One of the smartest moves is involving your builder before you go and purchase the lot. An experienced builder can identify hidden costs, design opportunities, and potential issues you might miss.

## The Foundation Of Everything

Your lot isn't just where your home sits—it shapes everything from design to cost to daily experience. Choose wisely, & you set the stage for a home that truly delivers on your vision.

A detailed map of the Grandview Estates LLC Addition in the City of Olathe, KS. The map shows a grid of lots numbered 1 through 56. A legend in the top left corner identifies different zoning types: 1.5 LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (yellow), 2.0 LOW-MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (orange), 3.0 MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (red), 4.0 HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (dark red), OPEN SPACE POND (light blue), OPEN SPACE DRIVE (green), and PAVEMENT DRIVE (grey). A red dot indicates a 'Sold Lot'. The map also shows 'MADISON HEIGHTS DRIVE' and 'STH 16'. At the bottom of the map, there is a logo for 'Gerrard-Hoeschler REALTORS®' with contact information for Jennifer Oefstedahl (608-797-9806) and Kathy Meyer (608.769.0461). Photos of the two realtors are included at the bottom.

# Good stuff. Great cause.

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