

Hester Residence/ Energy

Ralph Cunningham [rcunningham@cunninghamquill.com]

Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2016 2:42 PM**To:** CouncilMail**Cc:** Anton Markin [AMarkin@cunninghamquill.com]

Dear County Council Members,

I am writing to you on behalf of our clients Bill and Katie Hester, to urge you to support to adoption of the CB5-2016 bill currently under review.

When Bill and Katie first came to us in 2012 seeking to build an energy efficient and environmentally friendly home for their growing family they explained to us that they were not necessarily interested in certification for certification's sake. Instead they were interested in building the greenest house they could because of a sense of responsibility they felt to personally care for the environment, to raise their family in a safe and non-toxic home, and to be a good examples of environmental stewards for their children so that these values would be instilled in the next generation. We were pleased to assist them in the pursuit of this goal.

While there are long term cost savings for high efficiency and this technology is becoming more common, it is still far from common and still often has a high up-front cost. The costs of the very high standard of efficiency and indoor environmental quality the Hesters were seeking quickly added up to a large budget. In our efforts to make their goals achievable we suggested that they do pursue certification to take advantage of the generous tax credit program in question here. This would help justify and offset some of the extra expenditures they would have above and beyond that of a "standard" house built to meet the code minimums. Seeing a four year tax schedule we understood the program to provide four years of credits, despite the 2017 expiration date, as this new legislation would allow for.

With this understanding the Hesters enlisted the aid of certified National Green Building Standard consultants and verifiers to form a strategy for certification, monitor compliance during the construction, and to test, verify and submit for certification upon completion of the project. This was an additional up-front cost but one we felt was worth it given the tax credit program.

As we embraced the certification process we found that it also gave us new ideas of how to be greener in ways we hadn't thought of before. We also found that the discipline it imposed on us to keep to our goal was very helpful, assigning points and values to the different items and strategies so we could help understand them quantitatively and keep track of where we were. It would have been more tempting to cut more green features if we did not have this frame work to guide us.

While the Hesters were committed to an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly home before they decided to have their home certified or before they became aware of this tax credit program, both helped them to move forward with this project and remain on track. I urge you on behalf of both the Hesters and the other families in Howard county who might be considering many of the same issues the Hesters were back in 2012 and are trying to justify the premiums they would pay for a greener house, to enact this legislation to help them to move forward and build for the future in a responsible manner.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ralph Cunningham, FAIA

Founding Principal

CUNNINGHAM | QUILL ARCHITECTS PLLC

RALPH CUNNINGHAM FAIA
PRINCIPAL

Cunningham | Quill Architects PLLC
1054 31ST STREET NW
SUITE 315
WASHINGTON DC 20007
202.337.0090 V
202.337.0092 F
www.cunninghamquill.com

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