



This LR Barker-designed kitchen features Paperstone countertops, FSC-certified wood cabinets, and cork flooring.

LR BARKER BUILDER, INC.

Custom builder creating streamlined designs for downsizing owners

BY ZACH BALIVA

FOR SEVERAL YEARS, LEE BARKER worked as a general manager for a large custom builder. The company focused on the high-end market and routinely completed 10,000-square-foot homes. In 2005, Barker left to form his own company, LR Barker Builder, Inc., to specialize on smaller, more efficient custom homes.

Barker's smaller homes are half the size of his former company's projects, but he still serves the high-end market. "Our homes are equally high in quality but are of a realistic and responsible size. We overshot the mark in terms of home size as a country," Barker says. An enormous home for a young couple

without children, for example, is hard to justify or build in a sustainable way.

As a solo operation, Barker works on just a few custom homes each year but has found the marketplace shifting towards more reasonably sized homes due to environmental issues. "People still appreciate quality, and they are looking for efficient and smaller homes that meet their needs," says Barker, adding that economics have played an important role in the trend. American homes are what Barker calls "ridiculously large" when compared to those in other developed countries, and the utility and maintenance costs associated with size can pose large problems.

Since forming his own company four years ago, Barker has strictly pursued green projects and high-performance homes that allow him to focus on energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and the use of sustainable materials. One such project is the Goodwin Residence, a 4,000-square-foot ranch house in Colorado that features geothermal, radiant heating and cooling, and a 30-panel 7-kilowatt-hour photovoltaic (PV) system.

The home's detached garage is oriented at perfect solar south and holds all of the PV panels, while the main home includes passive-solar elements and limited glazing on the east and west.

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
FORT COLLINS, CO

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
CUSTOM HOME
BUILDING

YEAR FOUNDED:
2005