

Facing

Newsletter of Beacon Pathway

January 2006



Measuring Beacon's progress

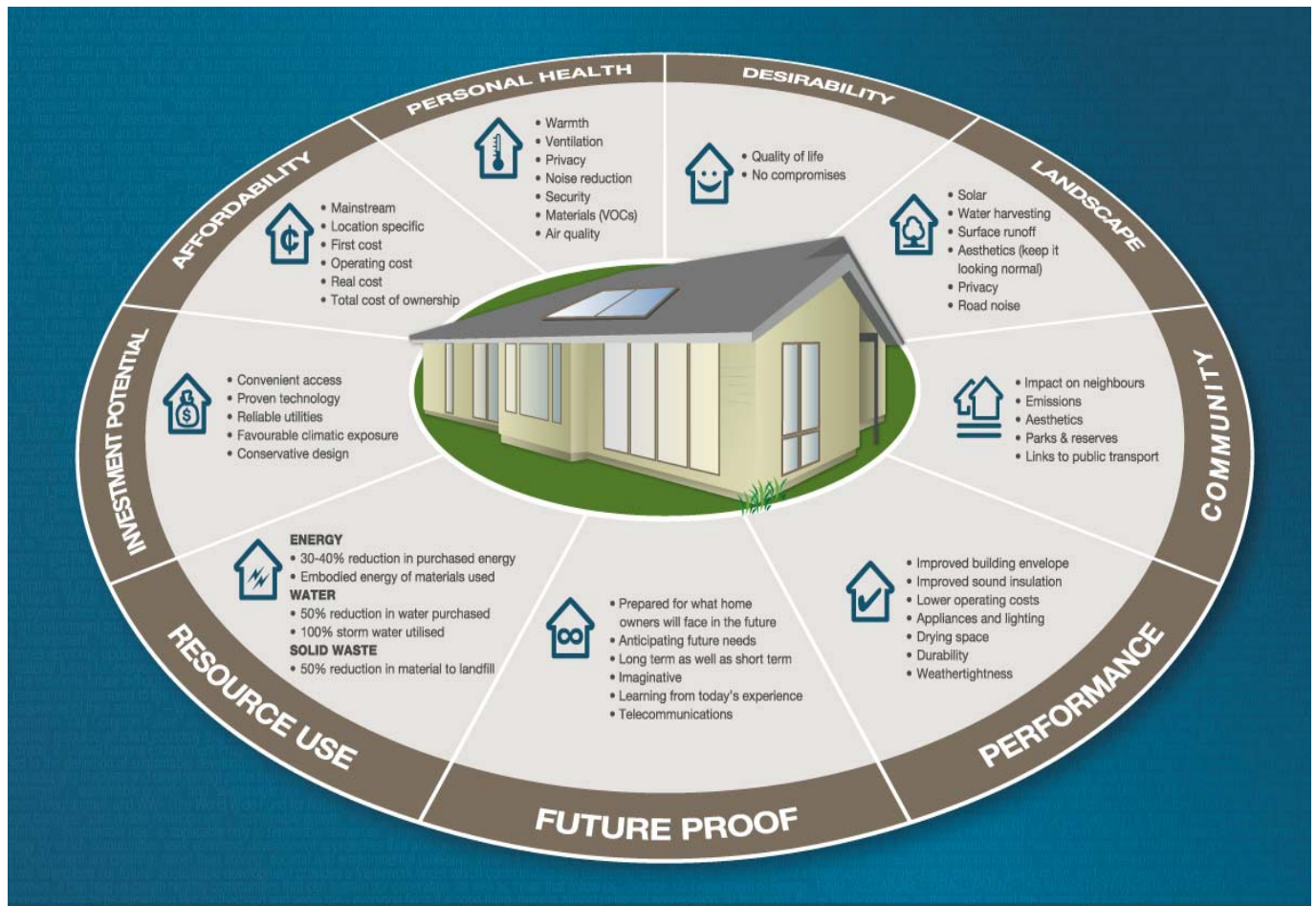
Beacon's goal is to bring the vast majority (90%) of New Zealand homes to a high standard of sustainability by 2012. But how can Beacon identify whether it is on track to reaching that goal? A team of researchers, led by Lynda Amitrano, have been developing a National Scorecard to measure progress towards sustainability.

Their work is still in draft form but suggests two Scorecards, splitting existing houses from new houses. This reflects the differing issues facing each sector, plus the varying sources of information available for each.

For each Scorecard, a composite index which tracks progress toward the goal will be developed, giving an overall visual picture of Beacon's current state of play.

A set of indicators has been developed for each objective in the footprint of a sustainable house (below). Measures, target levels and weightings have been identified for each indicator.

The indicators rely on a combination of existing surveys and sources plus two proposed new surveys, one for existing houses, one for new houses. Pilot surveys will be used to test the feasibility and accuracy of some of the new indicators.



Defining the market

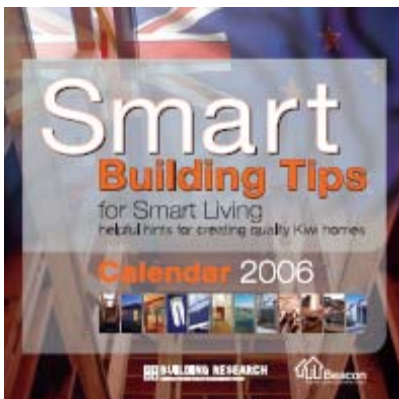
One area of information vital to targeting Beacon's efforts to improve New Zealand's housing is data on the structure and sectors of the housing market. A Market Segmentation project is underway, developing this information for use in future projects.

Graphs are being developed to show the proportion, trends and projections for various market segments within the New Zealand housing market to identify the key and potential growth areas. The market segments will be categorised in the following groups:

- House types, including single dwelling, semi detached
- Market factors, including freehold, ownership with mortgage, rental
- House factors, including age of house, insulation levels, size of house
- Social factors, including income, household size, age of occupants

Still need a calendar?

Together with Building Research, Beacon produced a Smart Building Tips for Smart Living calendar for 2006. Packed full of tips and information about living and building sustainably, it is both attractive and useful. Copies are still available – just email office@beaconpathway.co.nz



Consumer uptake of sustainability

Feeding into the development of the National Scorecard and Market Segmentation work, is a stream of information about how consumers see sustainability and the extent to which they are taking up the challenge. Beacon's Market Transformation team has conducted both qualitative and quantitative surveys of consumers. These surveys will feed into the National Scorecard work in monitoring the gap to Beacon's goal, and will help further define market segments.

The qualitative survey interviewed consumers in their homes to determine the factors likely to influence their uptake and demand for sustainable technologies and solutions (levers) as well as the problems faced by householders who have attempted to put them into practice (barriers). The survey also ascertained consumer knowledge of sustainability. Sustainability as a concept was not widely understood, and associated more with eco-houses and physical features rather than an improved quality of living.

The quantitative survey, conducted in conjunction with Consumers' Institute, comprised 20,000 questionnaires sent to Consumers' Institute members. The survey aimed to gather data on the level of uptake of sustainability features and practice, including features present and likely to be added, and the problems faced when adding features.

Winter warmth was the feature about their home that was most important to respondents (chosen by 48% of respondents). A home that was well-built (chosen by 42%) and one that was low maintenance (39%) were also important. After emergency kits, the next most popular changes made to the home were energy-saving light bulbs, cylinder wraps, heat pumps and solar water heating. Comments and a 30% "Don't know" response indicated that respondents were uncertain as to which building materials were environmentally-friendly.

The Technology Stream

The Technology research stream, led by team leader Jeremy Warnes, aims to assist in encouraging the uptake of sustainable technology through the sourcing and researching of existing and emerging technologies, as well as developing new technologies. Five key strategies to achieving this have been identified.

- A database of existing sustainable technologies is being developed to provide a foundation for the following projects.
- The real value and performance of current and emerging technologies will be assessed. This will highlight where opportunities lie for improving technologies or developing new technologies where the performance or cost structure of existing technologies is unsatisfactory.
- NOW, THEN and FUTURE Homes will trial existing and emerging technologies, providing further data on their contribution to sustainability and a practical understanding of how they work in 'real life' situations.
- The team will research and develop new technologies, based on gaps discovered in technology assessments, and on technologies which have the capacity to make the greatest positive change.
- People skilled in the art of a technology are critical to the ideas, developments, implementation and ultimately the success of any technology. For this reason the up-skilling of people to build 'experts' is a key objective.

Beacon's newest staff member

Beacon is pleased to welcome its new Knowledge/Science Manager, Vicki Cowan. Vicki has a strong science and sustainability background with a BSc Hons in Zoology and a MSc in Environmental Technology. After a role as Assistant Lecturer in Zoology at Otago University, she has progressed through a career in Marine Resources Consulting (UK based) with extensive project management experience in Africa and Asia.

Vicki is returning to the workforce after starting a family, and is based in Wellington. In keeping with Beacon's philosophy of operating as a virtual organisation, Vicki will work from home, utilising the facilities of shareholder and partner organisations as required.

Together, Creating Tomorrow's Homes

This booklet, published by Beacon Pathway Ltd last year, presents the key learnings from Beacon's initial phase of research. The booklet outlines Beacon's vision and goals, and looks at the issues Beacon, and New Zealanders, face in achieving them. Copies are still available – email office@beaconpathway.co.nz

