

HOMETOWN

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Mark Meyers designed an addition on his Camas home using steel framing, with some of his personalized touches, like an unusual steel staircase that leaves ample storage area in its space efficiency.



CLARICE KEATING/POST-RECORD

Sherry and Mark Meyers are adding on to their home, but using construction tactics uncommon in the Pacific Northwest. Their house is framed with 100 percent recycled steel — a product derived from old washing machines, abandoned cars and other metal products.

What a 'steel'

□ Camas family breaks construction norm by building house with 100 percent recycled steel

By Clarice Keating

Post-Record staff

One Camas family is steeling itself for the future.

Sherry and Mark Meyers are adding on to their home, but using construction tactics uncommon in the Pacific Northwest.

Their house is framed with 100 percent recycled steel — a product derived from old washing machines, abandoned cars and other metal products.

“And, if they decide to build a freeway through our house, we can recycle it and not fill the landfills,” Mark said.

While steel has been more commonly used in the construction of commercial buildings, it's becoming increasingly popular with residential homes, particularly in Florida and California, Mark said.

In areas like California, steel is preferable because it's noncombustible, which is safer in places of high fire risk, and also has less probability of damage in an earthquake. In Florida, steel-constructed structures less likely to be damaged in high winds or hurricanes with mechanical, rather than friction, connections — or the use of screws versus nails.

Sherry pushed for steel, too, but for a different reason: avoiding mold.

“The thing about Washington is that there's not so much of a fire threat,” she said. “But with all the moisture and with builders building year round, it's good for people to be able to buy a house and not have to worry about mold.”

The couple's 1934 house will now include a steel-framed addition on their 1.5-acre plot of land. The structure will add a master bedroom, and exercise, laundry, activity and music rooms. The addition is entirely green — with HardiePlank exterior and a metal roof that is 40 percent more energy efficient, an eco-friendly septic system and soy-based polyurethane insulation.

Mark's professional background is in construction. He designed the structure, with some of his personalized touches, like an unusual steel staircase that leaves ample storage area in its space efficiency.

According to Mark, steel is a logical alternative to wood, which has increased in price as the supply of old growth trees have dwindled and environmental concerns have risen.

He also said steel doesn't contract or warp on its foundation during weather changes, so homes built with steel frames don't experience cracking or jammed doors and windows.

While the cost of building this type of structure is 5 to 10 percent higher than a traditional wood frame home, the payback is in the knowledge that you're building green, Mark said.

“It's not much to pay to have the quality and to build green,” he said.

The concept, Mark said, was to build a house that grows with their family. With two children, a 7- and 11-year-old, the couple wants to ensure their space is fun and enticing to keep their children's social circle nearby.

“We want our kids' friends to come over here to play,” Sherrysaid.

According to the Steel Framing Alliance, there are some common misconceptions about building with steel.

First, some people believe the steel will interfere with television and radio broadcasts or it's more likely to be struck by lightning. SFA said neither of these assumptions is true.

“This is a concept house,” Mark said. “We've got some ideas that are going to blow people's minds.”



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Mark Meyers works on his 1934 Camas house that will now include a steel-framed addition on their 1.5-acre plot of land. The structure will add a master bedroom, and exercise, laundry, activity and music rooms. The addition is entirely green — with HardiePlank exterior and a metal roof that is 40 percent more energy efficient, an eco-friendly septic system and soy-based polyurethane insulation.

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— Sherry Meyers, building steel-framed addition to her home