**Birthing Clean Air at Liberty Park: Utah’s First Net Zero Community**

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The first net zero housing development in Utah was born at 10:00 am on September 30, 2016 at the groundbreaking for Living Zenith at Liberty Park—an entirely electric solar community with five homes that generate as much energy as they consume.

These modern eco-conscious homes are the fulfillment of a dream held by Mitchell Spence and Tiffany Ivins, a husband-wife duo, who founded Living Zenith. Inspired to improve air quality for their four kids, this team forges into new developer-territory to clear the air and reduce their asthmatic symptoms on red air days.

Mitchell explains, “I was tired of being part of the problem. Before I started building net-zero homes, I was contributing to air pollution that made me and my kids sick.”

Improving air quality is among the top goals of Salt Lake’s 2015 Sustainability Plan: “Green buildings are an important part of our sustainability movement,” said Vicki Bennett, Sustainability Director for SLC. In our valley, up to 39% of our air emissions come from buildings; “building energy efficient offices and homes is going to be a very important way to help improve our local air quality."

But, many large developers lobbied the legislature this year to reject greener building codes. “Yeah, it’s not popular for builders to build this way since it’s more expensive up front,” Spence confesses. “I’ll take a hit in profit with these first few subdivisions. But, we hope it’s the beginning of buyers demanding better options with greener buildings.”

“Net Zero building involves a steep learning curve,” Tiffany Ivins explains. “As the developers, we’re doing a ton of research and learning with experts from all over the world. We’re teaching our sub-contractors to use new methods and try different strategies. There’s sometimes pushback. We had to teach our designers, architects, and neighbors what we’re doing. It’s an intense education for everybody involved. But, it’s exciting to see it happen.”

Groundbreaking day garnered interest from civic leaders, architects, realtors, and collaborators who gathered to hear local sustainability gurus discuss the green future of Salt Lake’s housing options and its connection to health and livability.

Dr. Jörg Rügemer, Professor of Architecture at the UofU, spoke about the strategy of net zero homes: “[They] incorporate a passive design which radically reduces energy demands upfront. This highly insulated envelope, coupled with triple paned windows, and energy efficient systems allow these homes to perform 80% better than a code-standard building.”

“There’s no ‘safe level’ of air pollution and we harm different systems of our body with each breath we take that’s filled with harmful particulate matter, ozone, and other toxins. Net zero buildings make sense and literally offer a breath of fresh air,” explained Denni Cawley, Executive Director of Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment.

Locals also showed up to learn about this new community, including Jaclyn Bishop, who shared: “We live downtown because we love urban living and love this city. Everything is walkable around Liberty Park. It’s flat and friendly and pretty eclectic. It’s really awesome to see how many people are here to promote the regeneration of our neighborhood.”



Living Zenith is more than just a design and development company building net zero homes in urban walkable communities. We are a larger movement seeking to share best practices and build collaboration and community to encourage greener building for healthier living. [www.LivingZenith.com](http://www.livingzenith.com/)