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## Facing the Future

by Ethan Butterfield



Principals: Pictured from left to right are Bob Wildes, Sue Hawkes, and Jack McBride.

New Englanders Jack McBride and Bob Wildes are out to fundamentally change both the way homes are built and how a home building company functions with the launch of a hybrid modular green builder: ABODE.

McBride and Wildes, principals of New England developer Commons Development, have been tinkering with their design and construction processes for several years, incorporating modular - components and panelizing into the homes they build around New England.

By launching ABODE in July in Nashua, N.H., McBride and Wildes are committing whole-hog to a new system of building, one where sections of homes and panelized parts of homes will be constructed in modular factories, shipped to a site, then erected incorporating custom finishes done by hand in a more traditional manner.

McBride is so confident in ABODE's potential for success that he isn't shy about discussing his plan to phase out Commons Development and do all future developing and building under ABODE.

"We are fully committed—this is how we're building homes in the future," McBride says.

Because the process is so streamlined, ABODE will not have to hire additional project managers, estimators, supervisors, or subcontractors as they bring new projects online, and the time between contract and closing will be only 140 days.

"We are looking at the modular manufacturers as our primary subcontractors for framing, electrical, plumbing, whatever they can do," McBride says.

ABODE has three styles of home it will offer: an interpretation of a Colorado-style lodge, a traditional New England farm house, and a cottage or bungalow design. Each design will be customizable with no pre-set square footage or price.

The homes will all be Energy Star, LEED, and NAHB National Green Building Program certified. ABODE is also using locally sourced wood and other supplies for the interior finishes. And constructing the homes in factories will result in far less building waste.

ABODE already has signed deals with two manufacturers and will try to work out agreements with other factories to prevent supply limitations. Maintaining a consistent supply of modular parts is going to be essential because ABODE has ambitious growth plans including branching out into light-commercial and institutional housing construction.

On the residential side, ABODE expects to take its low-hassle design and build process to New England ski resorts, beach communities, and even the forests of western Massachusetts, says Sue Hawkes, the third principal at ABODE and CEO of marketing firm The Collaborative Cos. in Burlington, Mass.