



Photo courtesy of Heath Chisholm

Ten Townhomes Tie for Energy Efficiency

At the 15th and River subdivision in Idaho, [Benchmark Development Company](#) built 10 townhomes out of insulated concrete forms - a material that excels in energy savings. The project went through [Idaho Power's Performance Path program](#).

Built to Last

Benchmark Development Company had a vision for an entire subdivision of efficient townhomes. The builder opted for insulated concrete in order to increase the insulation value and air tightness of the townhomes.

Insulated concrete walls are an option for high performance builders looking to move away from traditional wood frame construction for a more efficient option. While this building style requires research and consideration on the costs associated with the method, for Benchmark Development Company, both the energy and non-energy benefits outweighed the learning curve of using insulated concrete.

Once installers are familiar with the product, insulated concrete can be a fast and efficient option to use on projects. It allows for soundproofing and creates a strong air seal. The energy savings achieved from using insulated concrete make the investment worth it.

Insulated concrete provides continuous insulation on both the outside and inside of the home which reduces thermal bridging and produces a secure air and moisture barrier which ensures uniform heating and cooling, and a more durable home.

BUILDER

Benchmark Development Company

RATER

Building Energy, Inc.

UTILITY

Idaho Power

LOCATION

Boise, ID

YEAR BUILT

2020

ENERGY SAVINGS

50% Above Code

TOTAL BUILDER INCENTIVES

\$20,000

HOME FEATURES

- Heat Pump Mini Splits
- Heat Pump Water Heater Tier 3
- R-25 insulated concrete walls

"[The main benefit of third-party home verification is] you get as best of an unbiased judgment of the home that you can possibly get."

HEATH CHISHOLM, RATER

Learn more

Visit the [BetterBuiltNW website](#) for additional case studies and subscribe to the [monthly newsletter](#) to stay informed.



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Did you know BetterBuiltNW offers a free HVAC Sizing Tool?

In as little as 15 minutes, contractors can calculate heating and cooling requirements and identify ways to improve the energy efficiency of their projects. HVAC Sizing Tool was created by electric and gas utility programs to help contractors right-size HVAC equipment. To get started, visit: <https://betterbuiltnw.com/hvac-sizing-tool>.

HPWHs are now more available, efficient and reliable than ever, with products carrying a 10-year warranty. As water heating accounts for roughly 18% of home energy use, this appliance can have a significant impact on lifetime energy use.

While the installation of heat pump water heaters is similar to installing standard-tank water heaters, there are some important considerations including condensate management and selecting the best location to enhance performance and customer satisfaction.

Learn more about the key considerations for HPWHs in this guide: [Heat Pump Water Heater Technical Guide for Single Family](#).

Benchmark Development Company has worked with rater, [Building Energy, Inc.](#), for years, and prioritizes building energy efficient homes to gain incentive rebates and federal tax credits. For the builder, it's a win-win where they are benefiting from building above code and the buyer is benefiting from lower than average monthly energy costs.

Energy Savings are in the Details

The townhomes have energy savings of 50% above Idaho's state energy code, and all come with Mitsubishi heat pump mini splits and heat pump water heaters (HPWH). Benchmark Development Company used *sizing tools* to ensure the HVAC units were sized proportionally to each townhome, maximizing the effectiveness of each unit. With an annual energy cost of \$680 per year, the townhomes save future homeowners on utility bills.

Installing *HPWHs* allows Benchmark Development Company to set themselves apart from competition. HPWHs can save homeowners hundreds of dollars each year in operating costs, while greatly boosting the energy efficiency of a home. For Benchmark Development Company, the investment of HPWHs pays off with higher Performance Path incentives.

As rater Heath Chisholm described the benefits of building energy efficient homes: "For the consumer, it is lower energy costs [for] them, lower carrying capacity per month and per year. More durable homes are generally built [to be] more energy efficient so you get a longer-lasting home. It's a better investment for the homeowner in the long run and in the short run."

To learn more about how to participate in Idaho Power's Performance Path, [visit their website](#).