

ENLIGHTENED DESIGN:

Nathan Kipnis' Philosophy of "High Design/Low Carbon™" Reflected in Sustainable, Resilient Homes

To Nathan Kipnis, FAIA, LEED BD+C, sustainable, resilient design is hardly a sacrifice—it expands the possibilities for innovative architectural forms, material use, and construction methods to create beautifully designed homes.

Kipnis, founder and principal of Kipnis Architecture + Planning in Evanston, Illinois, and national co-chair of the American Institute of Architects' 2030 Commitment Working Group, coined the term "High Design/Low Carbon™" long before sustainable architecture was in vogue. He is an award-winning pioneer in the artful fusion of design, comfort, and efficiency.

Reflecting his approach to synthesizing his clients' wishes and the context of the site, homes Kipnis has designed vary in scope and aesthetic. He recently completed a 5,800-square-foot modern solar lake house outside Chicago that resembles an upscale lake lodge, with features such as LED lighting, 9.8 kW solar photovoltaic panels, smart home system, poly-ash siding, strategically placed windows for natural daylighting, and ultra-high-efficiency zoned HVAC systems.

Another project that underscores Kipnis' "High Design/Low Carbon™" philosophy is a new contemporary home on five city lots in the heart of Chicago. The home exudes simple beauty and family-friendly functionality, with a larger structural and low-carbon footprint.

Meanwhile, a suburban home he designed is a modern version of a Craftsman-style house with an energy-use efficiency 52 percent lower than an equivalent 2003 baseline home.

As he designs other low-carbon, Net Zero—and even Net Positive—residences and commercial sites, Kipnis says there is urgency in embracing sustainably designed architecture.

"We have the ability to help reduce a home's carbon emissions with sustainable design while creating remarkable living spaces that are inspiring for all kinds of great reasons," he says.

NATHAN KIPNIS, KIPNIS ARCHITECTURE + PLANNING

BETTER: Best of 2019 Home & Design, Best Architect in Chicago

ILLINOIS GREEN ALLIANCE: 2019 Emerald Award for Individual Leadership

CHICAGO ARCHITECTS: No. 3 on list of the Best Residential Architects in Chicago

CO-FOUNDER: NextHaus Alliance

NATIONAL CO-CHAIR: AIA 2030 Commitment



▲ To maximize the lake view of this modern solar lake home outside Chicago, a large curved window wall was designed to integrate the structure directly into the window mull. This highly efficient residence uses 71 percent less energy than other homes of its size.



▲ Encompassing five city lots, this all-electric home seamlessly merges farmhouse design with high-performance, sustainable design. It incorporates a series of healthy-home features, including whole-house water filtration, high levels of air filtration, and individual room HVAC controls.



▲ A hallmark of this new home is its large open and connected living space and operable skylights that provide natural ventilation. Other features include a continual rigid insulation exterior wall rainscreen system, large solar photovoltaic array, and a sealed combustion direct vent high-efficiency fireplace.