



## Molinelli Architects

279 SLEEPY HOLLOW ROAD  
BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NY 10510  
TEL 914 941-2657 FAX 914 941-2830

[www.molinelliarchitects.com](http://www.molinelliarchitects.com)

**Build Neat Stuff©**

**Appeared in the Journal News 4/30/07. The last paragraph which is italicized was edited out of the version printed.**

Dear Editors,

I would like to have your reporters and readers understand they should be more wary when a builder claims their building is “green.” It is a vague term with no legal implication. This is why I like the LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) and became a LEED accredited professional. LEEDs is a third party testament to how sustainable and green a building really is. Much more can be learned at [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

I would be especially wary of builders who claim their building has a “zero carbon footprint.” There is no such thing. All people and buildings have an impact on the environment. When they claim this, they usually mean they have bought “carbon offsets” to compensate for the presumed carbon footprint of the building. (This system is analogous to the discontinued deservedly derided system of selling indulgences by the Catholic Church.) Carbon offsets allow people to pollute at the same rate as before, but pompously walk around guilt-free.

For example, I went to the web site of a popular environmentalist and put in information on my car and house to find my horrid carbon footprint. But I was also offered the chance to do something – pay \$180 to buy carbon offsets. This money will ostensibly go to develop clean energy – but I don’t know who gets a cut first and who really sees it gets used for that purpose. I could walk around guilt-free for almost no money, tell people my house has a “zero carbon footprint”, and yet change nothing about my habits or my habitat.

*In this vein, I have another program to clean up the environment. As an architect, I am aware that most of you live in ugly homes and work in ugly buildings. I am willing to have you send me photos of your building and my crack staff and I will determine your “ugly building footprint” (UBF) and offer to sell you “ugly building offsets” (UBOs). I will use the money to make other buildings pretty, after I pay my electric bill, mortgage, etc.*

Michael Molinelli, AIA LEEDs ap  
Briarcliff Manor NY

[Michael@molinelliarchitects.com](mailto:Michael@molinelliarchitects.com)