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## CULTURE

- [Best of Build Boston](#)

### Best of Build Boston

by Evan H. Shu, FAIA

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Build Boston, the largest regional conference and trade show for the design and construction industry in the United States, recently demonstrated again why it has earned such preeminence.

More than 14,000 architects, designers, construction and facility managers, and owners attended the 27th Build Boston conference, hosted by the Boston Society of Architects in November 2011. The trade show floor boasted some 300 vendors — up 6% over last year — who plied their products with the usual vigor.

But it was the conference programs themselves that suggested the breadth, depth, and direction of the industry itself. Attendance at these sessions — consisting of over 150 workshops, presentations, meetings, and tours — rose over 10% from 2010 levels, suggesting that many design professionals are ready to move forward and invest in increasing their knowledge base for a new year they hope will be more productive.

Some key themes of the conference were energy efficiency, digital technology innovation, construction detailing, and new building codes.

#### Rating Energy-Efficiency

In the last few years, the architecture, engineering, and construction industry has matured greatly in its production of energy-efficient buildings. More tried-and-true methods have been established that point toward making our buildings not just more efficient, but even able to reduce net energy use to zero, with some buildings going so far as to generate surplus electricity to feed back to the grid.

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Built by [Transformations, Inc.](#), the *Farmhouse II* model home in Easthampton, Massachusetts, scores just a 2 on the HERS Index.

Photo: Courtesy Transformations, Inc. [Extra Large Image](#)

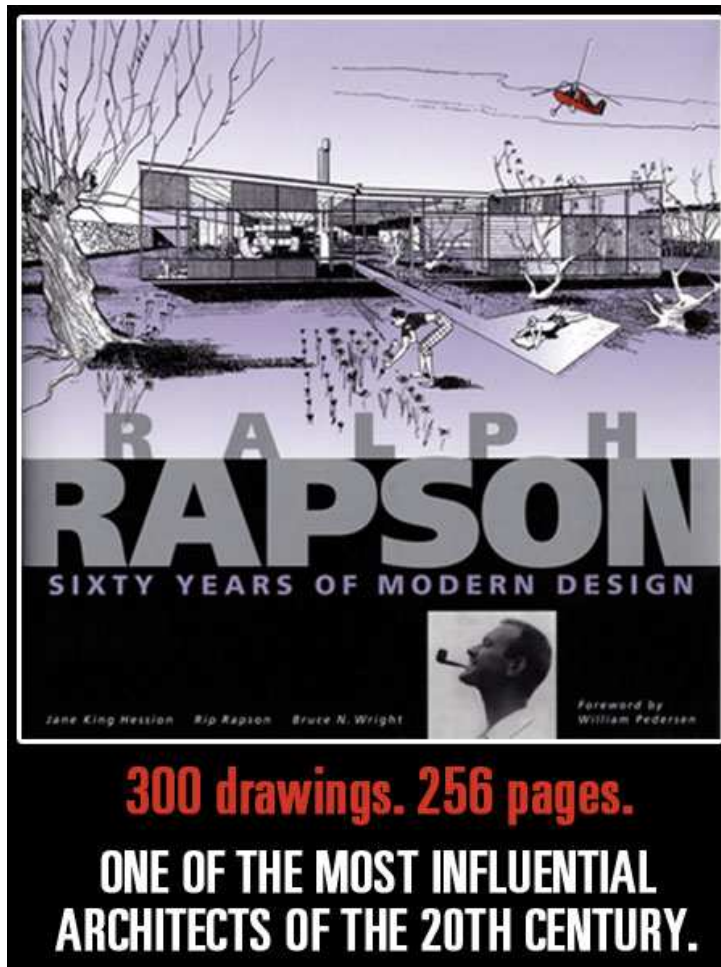


SUBSCRIPTION SAMPLE

More than 14,000 people attended the 2011 Build Boston convention and trade show, hosted by the Boston Society of Architects. Photo: [Ben Gebo](#) [Extra Large Image](#)

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Cited in a number of seminars was a relatively new (2006) measurement tool established in the residential sector called the HERS Index, which stands for Home Energy Rating System. It was developed as a residential energy-use standard by the nonprofit Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET). The HERS Index is accepted by the U.S. federal government for programs such as tax incentives, rebates, and Energy Star ratings, and has been incorporated into uniform building codes and into a growing number of state building codes.

The HERS Index is relatively easy to understand. The reference point is an "American standard" new house, built to the standards of the 2004 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). Such a home earns a HERS rating of 100. A net-zero-energy home scores a zero, while many homes would receive scores above 100. A house built to the 2009 IECC standard would be rated at 70, or at 65 if over 3,000 square feet (280 square meters).

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