

2017 Keynote Presentation

The Middle Way: Powering Industry Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This talk will be idealistic and unrealistic, and will present a vision about homes and housing that will rightfully be seen as really quite impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, it's also a vision that in one form or another must be pursued with blind resolve. The odds don't matter. The deeply entrenched social, psychological, economic, and environmental problems that inspire the ideas and ideals are unacceptable and matter significantly.

Like the quality and integrity of health care and education, the homebuilding industry has an inherent social contract with the public. That contract implies that every effort is made to ensure that people can rely on the capabilities and professionalism of those involved, and the resulting standards of the products and services supplied. By every measure, the homebuilding industry is failing to live up to its responsibility, leaving the public with compromised dwellings that as a standard: are psychologically stultifying, underperform structurally and thermally, are unduly defective, lack inherent durability, and are grossly inequitable and discriminating.

We must do better. Winston Churchill's famous statement, "First we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us," isn't hyperbole. It's deeply profound. The impacts of where and how we live impacts us individually and collectively in myriad ways we can no longer ignore. There's no hope of a better society without better homes for all. There's no hope of solving the environmental crisis unless we solve it in housing. It's the lowest hanging fruit for getting off fossil fuel.

The solution that will bring better homes to the American public must be scalable and equitable. And our impossible task is that we must see a way to wend through the obstacles and transform a recalcitrant industry. Luckily, it's not a technical problem at all; it's only economic and moral.

BIOGRAPHY

Since 1973, author and Bensonwood founder, Tedd Benson has championed high-performance, sustainable home and public buildings with an emphasis on innovation and craftsmanship. Bensonwood's search for a new and better way to build resulted in the founding of a new company, Unity Homes, focused on making healthy, high-performance homes more

affordable. Unity Homes was honored as one of Building Green's "Top 10 Products for 2016." A frequent presenter, Tedd spoke at the 2015 Greenbuild International Conference and Expo in Washington DC, with a talk entitled, "Making Sustainable Homes the New Normal."