VOXELL

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HOMESTAR

What it is, what it costs, and whether it's worth it.

What Homestar is

Homestar is New Zealand's independent rating tool for healthy, efficient homes, run by the New Zealand Green Building Council. The current version is Homestar v5.1. Homes are certified from 6 Homestar up to 10 Homestar, and the rating can be earned twice: an optional Design rating confirms the plans will perform before construction, and a Built rating verifies the finished home actually does.

The Building Code sets the legal minimum a home must meet. Homestar exists because the minimum is a floor, not a goal. A code-minimum house can still be damp in winter and overheat in summer. Homestar's mandatory requirements cover the things the code doesn't fully deal with: continuous mechanical ventilation, thermal performance beyond minimums, moisture control, and overheating risk.

What the ratings mean

6

HOMESTAR

6 Homestar fills the gaps in the Building Code. Homes at this level are noticeably warmer, drier, and cheaper to run. Residents feel the difference from day one.

8

HOMESTAR

8 Homestar means the outcomes that matter, comfort, air quality, and running costs, have been designed in deliberately from the start. The result is a home that performs consistently well year-round.

10

HOMESTAR

10 Homestar is the highest standard available in New Zealand. A 10 Homestar home would feel very similar day to day to a home designed to the certified Passive House standard. They are different frameworks, but the lived experience is comparable.

How assessment works

1. Register the project with NZGBC, through a Homestar Assessor.

2. **Design rating (optional).** The design is modelled and assessed from the plans and specifications. It isn't required for certification, but it's the checkpoint that tells you, before construction, that the home will reach its target rating.

3. **Built rating.** The finished home is physically verified, including site inspections during construction and checks that systems such as ventilation actually perform as designed.

4. **NZGBC audits and certifies.** Certification comes from NZGBC's independent audit, not from the designer.

Two accreditations matter: a Homestar Designer is trained to design and model homes to the standard, and a Homestar Assessor compiles and submits the project for certification. For developers with standard house designs, there is also a Homestar Ready pathway that pre-assesses a repeated design so it can be marketed and reused across projects.

For developers: how multi-unit projects are assessed

Repeated designs are grouped into typologies. The worst-performing dwelling in each typology is assessed, and its result applies to every home in that group. But a typology can still need several energy models: change the orientation beyond 45 degrees, the glazing, or the cladding (which changes the construction R-values), and that's a separate model, even if the floor plan is identical.

Medium-density needs care

This is where medium-density projects need care. Townhouse schemes typically sit close to the 6 Homestar line, and small design changes can have a big impact on the energy model. There isn't much wiggle room. Our approach is to check the model early, around resource consent, and keep checking it as the design evolves, so a late change doesn't quietly drop the scheme below its target.

What it costs, and what it returns

Certification involves two kinds of cost: NZGBC's fees (a project fee, plus a fee per typology and per additional dwelling, covering registration, audit, and certification) and the assessor's professional fees, which are separate. Ask us for a current estimate for your project; the structure rewards repeated typologies, so multi-unit schemes cost far less per home than one-offs.

On the build itself, an independent review commissioned by NZGBC found little to no additional construction cost to reach 6 Homestar over the current Building Code requirements. On the return side, analysis by Infometrics for NZGBC estimated a 6 Homestar home can save over $62,000 across 30 years in electricity and mortgage interest, with annual energy savings between roughly $300 and $1,800 depending on the rating and location. Banks have offered discounted green lending rates for certified homes, which is where much of that mortgage saving comes from. Offers change, so do your own due diligence with your lender.

Is it worth it?

FOR HOMEOWNERS

If you're building new, most of what 6 Homestar asks for is what good design does anyway. The certificate is independent proof your home performs, and it's increasingly recognised at sale time.

FOR DEVELOPERS

Certification differentiates the product, unlocks green finance for you and your buyers, and the typology structure keeps the cost per dwelling low. The risk isn't the standard, it's finding out late that you've missed it. That's a design-management problem, and it's solvable.

How Voxell fits in

We have a Homestar Designer and Assessor on the team, which means a rating runs end to end in-house: the design, the energy modelling, the site verification, and the submission to NZGBC for certification. We deliver both design and built ratings, and we've built an early-check protocol specifically for medium-density projects so ratings are protected as the design develops.

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR RATING

TALK TO US

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Sources: NZ Green Building Council, Homestar v5.1 Technical Manual (2025); Infometrics, Analysis of financial benefits of Homestar (commissioned by NZGBC); Aurecon, Homestar v5 Specification Review (commissioned by NZGBC). Current fee schedules and programme details: nzgbc.org.nz.

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