

Green Building Media Fact Sheet

November 2009

The home building industry coined the phrase “green building” in the late 1980s, turning a niche movement of resource-efficient homes into a quiet revolution.

Green building means “incorporating environmental considerations and resource efficiency into every step of the home building and land development process to minimize environmental impact.” In short, green building is a practical response to a variety of issues that affect all of us – including increasing energy prices, waning water resources, and changing weather patterns. It means making intentional decisions about:

- **Energy efficiency** improvements such as high levels of insulation, efficient HVAC systems, high-performance windows and energy-efficient appliances or lighting
- **Water conservation** measures such as water-efficient appliances, water-conserving fixtures, water filtration systems, and water-efficient or low-maintenance landscaping
- **Resource conservation** using materials and techniques such as high-performance engineered wood, wood alternatives, allergen-free materials, recycled building materials, sustainably harvested lumber and more durable products
- **Indoor environmental quality** considerations such as effective HVAC equipment, use of formaldehyde-free finishes, and use of products with minimum off-gassing or low volatile organic compounds (VOCs)
- **Site design** planning such as minimizing disruption and preserving open space
- **Homeowner** education through manuals and operating guides
- **Green business practices** that adopt ideas from other industries for saving resources and money in the home office

The first official green home building program began in 1991 in the city of Austin, Texas, and the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Denver introduced the first HBA-owned program in 1995. The movement has grown slowly but surely and today, new homes are significantly more energy-efficient than they were even 20 years ago, thanks to cutting-edge green building techniques and technologies.

A recent survey of NAHB members showed that more than two-thirds are incorporating at least some of these green features into the homes they build -- and that as the home building industry begins to revive, it will be significantly greener.

Many builders and remodelers are going green through the NAHB National Green Building Program, or NAHBGreen. The program was unveiled in February 2008 to provide a comprehensive set of educational resources, advocacy tools, rating systems, and referrals to a national green home certification system that lets home builders anywhere build green homes and home buyers at all price points buy green homes.

By November 2009, 125 state and local home building associations in 47 states had affiliated with NAHBGreen, providing regionally appropriate green building resources and education to their members and to their clients. There were more than 600 homes, developments and remodeling projects certified nationally with another 4,500 in the pipeline.

NAHBGreen prepares the industry for this increasing interest in sustainable construction by educating and credentialing building professionals, developing measurements for green building, and certifying homes to give assurances to the home-buying public.

Components include:

- **The NAHB Model Green Home Building Guidelines** and the **National Green Building Standard™** as the foremost green rating systems for residential construction in the United States. The standard is the only rating system for new and remodeled homes and residential subdivisions to undergo the complete and thorough American National Standard Institute consensus requirements – making it the ANSI-approved standard for green homes.
- The **National Green Home Scoring Tool**: a free online resource that enables any builder in any part of the country to gauge how green their planned home will be. The tool provides a “designer’s report” that compiles the information the builder has provided and scores the home according to the thresholds of the Guidelines or the Standard. Builders can also get design and technical assistance for their green building projects.
- Referrals to **National Green Building Certification**, available through the NAHB Research Center. Using the Green Scoring Tool as a guide, a builder can request that a home receive third-party certification after completing.
- **Verifier Training and Accreditation** via the Research Center to ensure that certification is consistent, accurate, neutral, and technically rigorous throughout the country.
- The **Certified Green Professional** designation that enables builders, remodelers, and other housing industry professionals to gain and then demonstrate and market green expertise.
- Extensive additional education opportunities through such venues as the **NAHB National Green Building Conference**, the **International Builders’ Show**, and other industry-sponsored events.

While some of the impetus to build green is being dictated by policy makers, increased consumer awareness is also driving the growth in this sector, making green a self-fulfilling prophecy — the more consumers are exposed to the benefits of green homes, the more demand we will see.

The National Association of Home Builders supports voluntary, regionally appropriate and market-driven green building initiatives, whether through affiliation with NAHBGreen or with another voluntary local or national green building program. NABH advocates for the benefits of green building and the importance of keeping these innovative practices voluntary to the home buying and policymaking members of their communities. The bar must be attainable so that builders and remodelers are encouraged to go beyond set benchmarks, not be limited by an inflexible mandate.

Green building is growing, and will continue to expand. NAHB will continue to lead the way, providing resources to the home building industry and home buyers so the nation can make these transitions in a cost-effective, voluntary and market-driven way.