

Green Building's Place In The Current Housing Market

It seems like you can't open your eyes these days without the word "Green" being plastered on something. The construction industry is no exception. In fact Green Building has become a multi-million dollar industry. Most of the interest has been at the commercial level while the residential sector has been significantly slower to adapt. The correction in the residential home building market could help to put more emphasis on green building and energy efficiency as we begin to see people staying in their homes for longer periods of time as well as the likely hood of rising energy costs. Building green is about more than solar panels and bamboo floors, it is a philosophy that examines how the home building process can be done in a way that minimizes its impact on valuable resources while at the same time building a beautiful and efficiently operating home. It is really about improving both the building process and the finished product.



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A misconception of green building that is partly responsible for its slow growth at the residential level is that it costs "so much more". Obviously adding a geothermal heating system or P.V. solar panels to the construction budget is going to drive up the price but you need to look at the bigger picture of how much money will be save in the future on utility bills. You will hear the term "whole systems approach" applied to green building. This is a way of viewing the process of building a home from the design phase, through construction, to the finished product landscaping included, as an integrated system. The design of the home, site selection, and orientation on the lot are all aspects that can be applied which add little or no additional cost to the project. Construction in the US is one of the biggest contributors to land fill overcrowding. With proper planning and by implementing such ideas as on site recycling, construction waste can be greatly reduced, limiting the stress on landfills and saving money on construction dumpsters. The consumer demand for sustainably produced materials has caused the price to come down significantly over the past few years making it more available to the masses.

Because commercial buildings tend to be owned for longer periods of time, such factors as utility costs and indoor air quality have been of more importance then in the residential sector where during the real estate boom houses were built sold and then "flipped" so quickly that there was little interest in these matters. With the increase in data demonstrating the correlation between poor air quality and respiratory illnesses, consumers are becoming more concerned with the types of finishes that are being used in the home building process as well as better circulation of inside air. While the full scope of green building is vast it is important to remember that aspects in the home building process can be implemented to reduce costs, improve air quality, and reduce the environmental footprint that we leave, all without breaking the bank.

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