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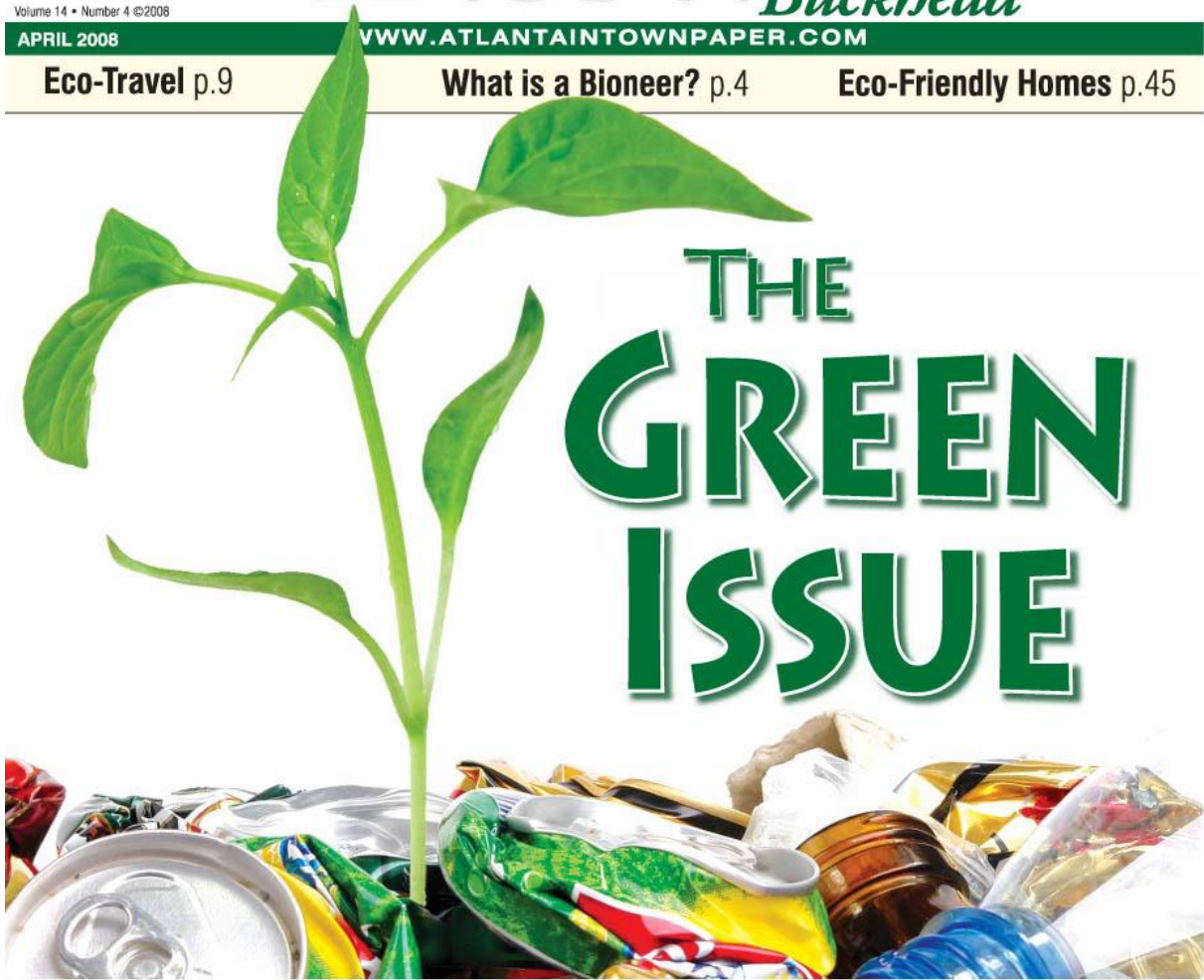
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# Building Green

## Homes, condos, apartments get eco-friendly



The eco-friendly design at eon at Lindbergh doesn't mean giving up luxury. The kitchens feature granite countertops, brushed-chrome hardware and 10- to 12-foot ceilings.



eon at Lindbergh is located in the heart of the City Center development, with MARTA, shops and restaurants just steps outside the front door. Open floor plans make entertaining a breeze.



Oakland Park on Memorial Drive across from Oakland Cemetery is Atlanta's first LEED certified building, meaning it has met national criteria for being eco-friendly. Energy efficient appliances, specially made windows and renewable flooring are all part of the design.

By Martha W. Barksdale

Jeff Dinkle said he decided to devote his business exclusively to the building of environmentally friendly homes as a way to set himself apart from other home-builders. Now, seven years later, he can't imagine building any other way.

Dinkle is president of EcoCustom Homes, "where building is second nature," according to its slogan. He said his company's homes utilize technologies and materials that limit the use of the Earth's natural resources and help create a healthy living space.

More than 300 other builders have joined EcoCustom Homes in the EarthCraft program, developed in 1999 by Southface Energy Institute in partnership with the Greater Atlanta Home Builder's Association. In order for a home to be designated a Certified EarthCraft House, the builder must participate in a design review, submit a worksheet and allow an independent third-party inspection when construction is finished. EarthCraft Communities certifies developments with more than 35 units.

The EarthCraft certification program brings together everyone involved in the construction process. "When you're dealing with multiple contractors," Southface Director of Sustainable Development Gray Kelly said, "it helps to get everyone around the same table." All systems are dependent on each other, Kelly said, noting that, for example, all the insulation in the world won't help with heating and cooling costs if the ductwork is not sealed properly.

Kelly said developers used to be able to get government grants when building eco-friendly dwellings, but that money has gone away now that green building has become more common. He said more and more jurisdictions are offering incentives, such as fast-track permitting, to projects that meet energy-efficient standards.

Many of his clients are not specifically looking for a green home, Dinkle said, but are sold on it once they are educated about the benefits. By spending about \$9 per square foot extra for

"green" options, a homeowner can cut energy bills by about 45 percent, Dinkle said. The standard he uses to decide if a feature is cost-efficient is if it will pay for itself in savings after five years.

In the past, green building was utilized mainly for single-family homes and condos, Kelly said, but more rental units are incorporating these features these days. "It's a relatively recent market shift," he said, "but renters are looking for energy efficiency, too."

Right now, 14 multi-family projects with more than 1,000 units are going for certification, according to Southface, along with 260 single-family dwellings.

Gables Residential is working towards EarthCraft certification on 943 units in three new properties in the Downtown area — Gables Century Center, Gables Sheridan and Gables 820 West — in what is its first plunge into green building. Gables Residential CEO David Fitch set the goal for Gables to be at the forefront of the "green building" initiative in the multi-family housing industry, and early last year Gables approached Southface about the three projects.

Dave Skelton, Gables' vice president of investment operations in Atlanta, said having the apartment homes become EarthCraft certified is a "win-win scenario" for the residents, the company and the environment.

In addition to meeting EarthCraft standards for construction, eon at Lindbergh utilizes its location as an eco-friendly feature. The 352 one- and two-bedroom residences are in City Center, with a plethora of restaurants and shops just outside the door, and the Lindbergh MARTA station is just a stroll away.

"When developing eon at Lindbergh, we set out to create a community that appeals to residents who are looking for a different way of life — one that provides the convenience of living in the city while at the same time offering solutions that will allow green practices to be easily incorporated into every-day activities," said Ralph Phillips of The Dawson Company, which is developing eon at Lindbergh

along with Lane Company.

The next generation of green buildings will incorporate features that would seem at home in the Jetsons' space pad. At Viewpoint, the Novare Group's new building in Midtown, all homes will include an Internet protocol thermostat that can be remotely accessed from any computer or even a BlackBerry, said Mike Evely, president of Novare Management. Residents will program "home" and "away" settings, saving energy when they aren't home.

In February, Oakland Park, an 85-unit condo building on Memorial Drive across from historic Oakland Cemetery, celebrated its LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. The nationally recognized rating requires buildings to meet green criteria. For Oakland Park, that meant steel and concrete construction, drought-resistant landscaping, high-performance appliances and fixtures, sustainable bamboo flooring, eco-friendly paint and more.

EcoCustom's Dinkle said he sees a future in which energy efficiency won't be a perk — it will be mandatory. He said Atlanta is lagging behind other parts of the country as far as energy-efficiency standards are concerned. For example, rainwater harvest systems have been common in Texas for about 30 years, and Dinkle said most of the solar panels now produced go to California.

From building green to buying green, Sanctuary Real Estate is making "green homes" a priority. Realtor and principal broker Rita Bacot Scott said eco-friendly homes have really just caught the public's attention in the last five years. "We have clients who are now requesting that they be shown homes that are EarthCraft certified," Scott said.

Sanctuary, which has many of its listings in eco-conscious Inman Park, Candler Park and Virginia-Highland, is also working with builders to promote and sell their green homes. Sanctuary's website at [www.yourownsanctuary.com](http://www.yourownsanctuary.com) has also become a clearing house for tips and ideas on making your home more green. **IN**