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Green Building Know-How

Strategies for success

Build and market green homes

Go green with natural gas



Green Affiliation

By Wendy Huston

KEY WAYS TO ADD GREEN TO YOUR MARKET APPEAL



GUS IS DOING NOTHING TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

BUT HIS EARTHCRAFT HOUSE IS.

Buying an EarthCraft House is a simple way to help our planet. That's because an EarthCraft House consumes less energy and natural resources. EarthCraft House builders know how to create healthier, more comfortable homes, reducing utility bills and increasing value. Any home — from a cottage to a mansion — can be an EarthCraft House.

Find a better builder or renovator at www.earthcrafthouse.org and do your part to help save the world.



Program brought to you by Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association Southface

Ads like the "Gus" ad help reinforce the branding message for EarthCraft House™.



recent study of homeowners buying green homes predicts the industry will grow exponentially over the next two years. Based on market research and a survey of homebuyers, the study by McGraw Hill Construction and the National Association of Home Builders determined two-thirds of all homeowners are aware of green building, and 8 percent are extremely knowledgeable about green practices. Builders interested in meeting this growing demand from environmentally conscious homebuyers have a broad spectrum of marketing opportunities available to increase awareness, education and profits.

Aligning with regional or national programs, such as ENERGY STAR® — the government backed program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy — offers

ENERGY STAR partners have free access to an online marketing toolkit, brochures, fact sheets and outreach campaign materials.

invaluable tools for builders. ENERGY STAR partners, for example, have free access to an online marketing toolkit, brochures, fact sheets and outreach campaign materials. The program also gives partners the opportunity to have links to their websites from the ENERGY STAR site, which provides a source of prospective leads. These built-in marketing resources and brand recognition help builders attract buyers interested in going green. Public awareness of the ENERGY STAR label is now over 65 percent, according to a recent nationwide survey. "It's a label the American consumer recognizes and understands, and that can be valuable to builders," says Jonathan Passe, communications coordinator for ENERGY STAR residential programs. To date, more than 5,000 builders are partnering with ENERGY STAR and nearly 850,000 ENERGY STAR qualified homes have been built across the United States.

Maione Homes, a leading builder of luxury custom homes and communities in northern New Jersey, committed four years ago to offer only ENERGY STAR homes. Andrew Grabis, field manager for Maione Homes, says homes that meet the program's standards appeal to their buyers because they are more efficient. "Typically, (buyers) are moving from houses that were expensive to own, and they want homes to offer lower maintenance and energy costs — along with all the amenities," he says. The builder uses ENERGY STAR promotional materials to explain the cost savings to customers, as well as personal accounts from current green homeowners and tours through green homes, to explain the steps that are taken to make them more efficient.

In addition to national programs, builders also can partner with regional programs for similar incentives. EarthCraft House™, for example, is a green building program in the Southeast that has certified more than 5,000 homes since its inception in 1999, according to Sean Bleything, field operations manager for EarthCraft House. The EarthCraft House program also offers marketing materials such as logos, yard signs and brochures to green building partners. And it goes one step further by helping train agents on how to sell a certified EarthCraft House.



Virginia's Miller Custom Homes takes a creative approach to green marketing. Instead of logs, this natural gas fireplace uses a bed of tempered and tumbled glass, which also helps retain heat.

These builders are using new ENERGY STAR® guidelines to bring you a whole new level of comfort, efficiency, and performance.



Find out how at energystar.gov/homefeatures



To earn the government's ENERGY STAR, a home must be independently verified to meet new and more rigorous guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. ENERGY STAR qualified homes are quieter and more comfortable, have lower utility bills, and help protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more. Visit energystar.gov.



ENERGY STAR® outreach materials can be customized with builder names. Along with advertising costs, builders share in the benefits of ENERGY STAR's widespread name recognition.

Haven Properties, a builder of luxury, high-performance, semi-custom homes is one of the first builders in Atlanta to offer 100 percent EarthCraft House homes. "We saw the advantages of green building early on because we are always trying to improve our methods and deliver a better home to our buyers," says Tori Ewing, vice president of corporate communications and marketing for Haven Properties. The builder focuses on the health and environmental benefits of construction and materials used in green building that attract about 50 percent of buyers. Haven Properties touts the use of formaldehyde free insulation and a fresh-air ventilation system for healthier indoor air; energy-efficient appliances; and a termite elimination system free from chemicals. "Green building adds value in so many ways to the homes and lives of our customers. It means they can have a beautiful home with all the amenities that also helps protect the health of their families and the environment."

John Ainslie, co-owner of Ainslie-Widener, a custom and neighborhood home builder and developer in Virginia, agrees buyers are equating green building with quality. Ainslie-Widener recently committed to building EarthCraft House homes. But the change actually meant maintaining the high standards already in place. "For the most part, we were already using materials and construction methods that would meet EarthCraft House standards," Ainslie says. "We see a growing awareness of the benefits of green building among homebuyers, and our association with EarthCraft House is a way to tap into this market."

Advertising the financial benefit to buyers is key to reaching the

green market. The green homeowner survey found the No. 1 incentive to buy a green home is the lower operating and maintenance costs. High-efficiency natural gas furnaces with programmable thermostats and tankless natural gas water heaters are among the most popular choices for green homes. Jeff Dinkle, president of Eco Custom Homes, a leader in sustainable custom homes in Atlanta, says offering natural gas heating is the most economical choice. "There's no better way to cost-effectively deliver on our standards for comfort and efficiency in the high-performing homes we build," he says.

Dinkle not only believes in equipping his homes with green products, he also is well-versed on the value of educating his staff and buyers about the benefits of green features in environmentally friendly homes. Green buyers surveyed cited a lack of education and awareness as the most significant obstacle in purchasing a green home, so Dinkle says builders who approach and educate buyers about green homes will succeed. His website offers links to green services, a blog and presentation slides on green homes, and buyers who visit his model homes walk away with a spreadsheet explaining the features of a green home and how much money buyers will save living in it. Dinkle also offers consultations and advice on environmentally friendly materials and techniques, such as installing natural gas. "You can either sit by and watch the trend, or you can get involved and keep yourself in the market," he says. 🏡

The Green Homebuyer

A recent green homeowner survey co-sponsored by McGraw-Hill Construction and the National Association of Home Builders sheds light on the awareness of green techniques and practices among homebuyers, and the decision-making process in choosing a green home.

The large majority of green homebuyers — a striking 71 percent — are women, and 65 percent of green homeowners are married couples. The average age of buyers is 45. Most (79 percent) are college-educated, and nearly two-thirds have annual incomes over \$50,000. Interest in green building is greatest in the southern and western states. Typically, green homebuyers consider family and personal relationships as key values and are willing to spend time to get the best deal, the survey says.

Lower household operating costs top the list of incentives for buyers to go green, but environmental and health concerns are not far behind. Lisa Turner, owner of Angler Construction in Decatur, Georgia, began offering green renovations four years ago and has seen firsthand the increasing demand for green building options. She notes the parallels between her customers and the survey's findings. "People are becoming increasingly aware of green building options, and they're looking for builders who can show them how to make a difference," she says.

