

Oregon REALTORS® Help Homeowners Think Green

“Going green” is more than just prudent environmental philosophy; nowadays it’s also an increasingly important factor in maximizing home asset value. Oregon REALTORS® encourage homeowners to integrate earth-friendly products, services and practices into daily living, home upgrades, renovations and when planning new construction.

Today, houses that meet the U.S. Green Building Council definition of green use less energy, less natural resources and fewer toxic chemicals. Home energy use currently accounts for 17 percent of the total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and 21 percent of national energy consumption. Energy-efficiency improvements will help us to leave a smaller footprint on the earth.

Demand is increasing for green homes, especially at the higher end of the market, said Jerry Howard, chief executive officer of The National Association of Home Builders.

Locally, Salem’s Pringle Park was named Green Land Development of the Year in 2007 by the NAHB. Homes in the 32-acre Pringle Park are built to be energy-efficient and constructed using certified green building materials and techniques. Features include geothermal heating, a porous asphalt street system for managing rainwater, an onsite biodiesel co-op, community orchard and a car sharing service.

A 2006 survey by the American Institute of Architects found that most people would be willing to pay \$5000 more to build or buy a house that uses less energy or protects the earth. A home’s eco-friendliness can be improved indoors by fixing leaks; installing efficient appliances and water-conserving fixtures and/or rainwater filtration systems; using a programmable thermostat; and opting for paints, stains and glues that are low in volatile organic compounds to improve indoor air quality. Around the yard use native plants in landscaping and practice composting and pesticide-free gardening.

Plan construction to minimize the waste of building materials and work with products that are sustainable or recycled, such as insulation made from paper products or cotton. There are significant tax credits to consider that may help cover the expense of improvements. For example one may claim up to \$500 on the Internal Revenue Service’s 1040 form for installing energy-efficient windows, insulation, roofs, doors and more. Many upgrades pay for themselves in time; for every dollar spent on weatherization, an average energy savings of \$1.53 is realized, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

A green-certified home will likely sell at the upper end of the range and more quickly than others recent data show. Eco-brokers are real estate professionals trained to help clients recognize the building methods, products and features that make a home green, healthier and energy-efficient. Visit www.EcoBroker.com for more information.

####