

A New Catch Phrase In Housing, “The High Performance Home”

Guest Column,

By Ronnie Godfrey, CGB, president, R Godfrey Homes

We use the term “The High Performance Home” in our business as do many builders today. Unfortunately, it means different things to each company. So I thought it might be worthwhile to try to define the term as I see it and to give it relevance against the rising concerns of “Global Warming.”

First, is there such a thing as Global Warming? I liked the response given by architect **Marilyn Miller Farmer, AIA, LEED A.P. Director, Green Building Pages, Inc.** in her interview in the April issue of the online magazine Streetscapes, a publication of the James Hardie Company;

Question:

How would you answer skeptics who dismiss global warming as a myth, or green building as a fad?

Ms Miller:

“I would suggest that anyone dismissing global warming today is not observing the writing all over the walls. Start with the weather patterns, the bottled water that has replaced use of tap water for drinking, the lack of available resources, the diminishing food supplies, the state of our oceans and rivers, the diminishing number of species, the dislocation of growing numbers of people, the global issues and disputes over use of available resources, all of which can be traced back to our growing populations and the incredible stress we are placing on the environmental systems that have supported all species, including us”.

I believe she hit the nail on the head. Additionally, on a widely distributed news piece several scientists quit couching their words and came out and warned that global warming was happening (see ABC World News report 4/6/2007).

So what's to be done about this? Let's get back to High Performance Homes (HPH). Can the definition and building of high performance homes be part of the solution to global warming? What if an HPH used less energy, was safer, healthier and more comfortable to live in, was made of sustainable materials and had a lower overall impact on the environment.

This from The Green Building Initiative,
<http://www.thegbi.com/home/default.asp>;

"With rising utility costs dominating recent headlines, many Americans are looking for ways to trim their monthly bills by making their homes and businesses more energy-efficient. One way to accomplish this is to implement "green building" principles into the construction of homes and businesses.

Quite simply, green building is an effort to develop more energy-efficient, healthier and environmentally-responsible buildings. Strategies used by today's green building practitioners look at every phase of the construction and operation of buildings, whether they are focused on indoor air quality or waste reduction.

By incorporating various green building principles into a structure, the average home or business can save as much as 50 percent on their utility costs according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The benefits don't end there though, as green building also benefits society at large by reducing the environmental impact of a structure.

For example, according to the Department of Energy, if just one in 10 households incorporated energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, we could prevent more than 17 billion pounds of air pollution - which is equivalent to removing more than 250,000 cars from the road. In addition, green buildings require less maintenance and repair, reduce short- and long-term costs, promote health among occupants and improve worker satisfaction."

OK, so here's what I'm going with. A High Performance Homes is one that uses sustainable materials, is energy efficient, and uses value added green building practice that causes it to be friendlier to the environment.

The benefits to owners of HPH are;

- More Comfortable and Quieter- Tight construction, better windows, and improved insulation ensure consistent temperatures and keep out excessive noise.
- Lower Maintenance- Enjoy the peace of mind that comes with a low maintenance home. Tight construction and long lasting, efficient equipment make these homes more durable, helping to minimize many of the maintenance problems found in typical homes.
- Healthier and Safer- Your family will breathe easier in a tightly constructed and proper ventilated home that works to reduce dust, pollen, and pests.
- More Energy and Resource Efficient- Lower utility bills, and the good feeling that you are doing something to help fight global warming

In my next article we will explore some of materials and practices in “Windows, Insulation and Doors, Oh My!”

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