

BETTER CHOICES DON'T ALWAYS JUST HAPPEN

“A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” – Rosalynn Carter

I've heard it more than a few times from builders regarding home buyers and their propensity for choosing energy-efficiency and green building options as part of their new home package: “If they ask for it, we'll give it to them.” I have no doubt that this is the case, but in spite of everything being done to educate the general public, I'm just as sure that not every prospective client walks through the door of the sales office with a *Built Green® Checklist* in hand.

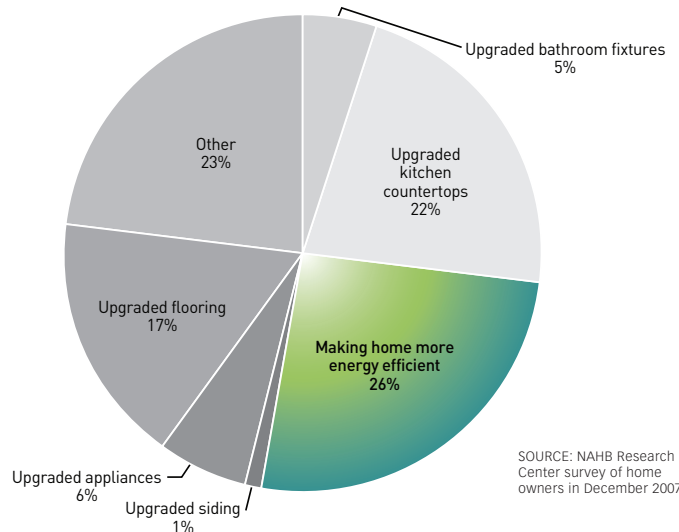
There are reasons, of course. A big one is that the motivation for putting energy or green building at the top of the home buying list usually is accompanied by a crisis like, say, an outrageous gas and electric bill, living in an uncomfortable home or suddenly having beachfront property in Denver. But, frankly, most buyers assume that new homes are healthy and comfortable and efficient. That's why we have building codes, right? They just aren't as sure about this “green” thing.

As we have pointed out before, buyers get their information about new home features and options primarily from builders and sales offices. Buyers seem to have a pretty good idea what they want (not necessarily what they need) when they walk in the model home. If they had an extra \$5,000 to spend, according to a recent National Association of Home Builders survey, they would apply it to such things as upgraded floors, appliances, siding and energy efficiency. Here's where a well-informed sales staff can guide the client to better choices.

Let's focus on those areas that also can have green attributes. For example, upgraded flooring takes us into a wide range of green building options that are preferable to other flooring choices. Bamboo flooring is showing up in more and more homes as an attractive interior feature. Durable tile adds to the interior thermal mass, storing heat as a passive heating strategy. Linoleum (the real stuff, made of cork and linseed oil) is a very durable and attractive option. Applied with the right materials, there are also indoor air quality benefits to these flooring choices.

Upgraded appliances offer plenty of opportunities for water and energy

IF YOU HAD AN EXTRA \$5,000 TO SPEND ON YOUR NEW HOME, WHAT WOULD YOU PUT THAT MONEY TOWARD?



savings, but the sales staff should be informed about models that are most efficient. An appliance “upgrade” doesn't necessarily translate to efficiency. Making the home more energy efficient, however, is nearly a no-brainer. Reducing energy is pure green in more ways than one, but there are still priorities. High-efficiency, sealed-combustion gas appliances should be standard; a good insulation and air sealing package and high-performance windows are good new construction investments.

There are plenty of countertop choices out there, some of which are not all that green, but some are. Information at BuildingGreen.com (www.buildinggreen.com) includes several products that are appealing countertops made with post-consumer recycled materials. Concrete countertops are an excellent (although typically expensive) and attractive choice. The “green-ness” of concrete varies with the recycled material content.

So it turns out that getting buyers to that greener level is not such a huge leap. Having this information available when new clients approach your sales office will help guide buyers to greener choices, and while this may not be an “ah-ha!” moment for the home buyer, it is one more chance to replace old thinking with new information, to the benefit of your customers and the bigger picture of a greener industry. Fortunately, you don't have to dive into the infinite world of green product information to get started. “Sales Tips” in the *Guide to the Built Green® Checklist* has information about the benefits of many *Checklist* items. You don't even have to remember where you put that guide. You can find it in the *Built Green® Checklist* section at www.builtgreen.org. 🏠

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