



Today's News

[June 17, 2008 09:15 AM Eastern Daylight Time](#)

Chicago Homebuilder Advocates “Obtainable” Green Homebuilding as First Step towards Building Greener Future

The average home generates 60 tons of CO² annually^A

CHICAGO--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--[Chicago custom homebuilder](#), Nick DiCosola, president and founder of custom-homebuilding firm Distinguished Dwellings (www.distinguisheddwellings.com), recommends that creating an environmentally **friendlier** home should be the goal for every homeowner and builder. He states that it is achievable without impacting a home's visual aesthetic.

“I like to reinforce that people build ‘functional green’ more than ‘aesthetic green,’” DiCosola explains. “People often think of green building as involving bamboo flooring, countertops made from recycled materials, etc. I call this ‘aesthetic green,’ and it often involves a very modern look. Many of my clients want a traditional look and/or they want the money they invest in building green to reduce their energy consumption and benefit the environment for years to come. That won't necessarily happen with ‘green’ countertops.”

Green residential building is expected to become a \$38 billion industry and represent ten percent of new-home construction by 2010.^B Incorporating energy-saving materials and systems into the home can save the Earth from billions of pounds of air pollution.^C DiCosola explains that all of his green-building recommendations reduce energy use and have no impact on a home's style or appearance: they are primarily construction methods and mechanical systems located in the walls or in the mechanical room.

DiCosola believes that building functional green is beneficial to both the environment and the average homeowner's budget. Functional green building is relatively inexpensive and something that can easily be incorporated into virtually all-new home construction and remodeling. This is not the case when it comes to adding solar panels or geothermal heating/cooling, considering the up-front costs. And, the payback often takes many years. DiCosola also states that a homeowner building a French Chateau-style home typically doesn't want solar panels on her roof interfering with the style.

Very achievable functional green building methods people can employ:

- Insulation: Use as much as you can appropriately fit in any given space. There are many new insulation choices available today, ranging from recycled newspapers and denim to injected foam. High-absorption insulation also slows the flow and leakage of heat.
- Furnace: Install a power-vented, D.C.-motor, dual-stage, 90 percent+ efficiency furnace.
- Hot water heater: Utilize a tankless, on-demand hot-water heater. It tends to be 20-25 percent more efficient than a traditional hot-water tank and takes up much less space.
- Low-flow toilets and washing machine: An older toilet can use three to seven gallons of water per flush! Today's standard toilets use 1.6 gallons of water per flush and save thousands of gallons of water a year. Dual-flush toilets, widely used in Europe, are the next step in efficiency.
- Low-E and argon-filled windows: These produce the best R-factor (degree of insulation) and minimize the escape of heat in the winter and cool air in the summer. Triple-glazed or paned windows are the ultimate in energy-efficiency.
- ENERGY STAR heating and cooling products: The EPA says that if 10 percent of households used these, 17 billion pounds of pollution would be kept out of the air.
- Build tight with ventilation: Homes that are built tighter are more comfortable and less drafty. However, it is important to bring in fresh air through mechanical means such as a heat-recovery ventilation unit.

"The additional cost of using many of these energy-saving measures compared to lesser energy-saving options pays for itself within two to five years," DiCosola reinforces.

Now is the time to incorporate energy-saving features, as the expense of building green is on the decline. While it used to cost at least fifteen percent more to build with green products, it will now only add one to three percent to construction costs.^D

"The benefits of green building include a healthier and more comfortable home, along with savings in energy costs," explains Bill Styczynski, president of the architectural firm of Styczynski, Walker & Associates in Willowbrook, IL. "Typically, homes built to such standards also tend to have greater attention to detail during construction, including proper window flashing." Styczynski currently works with the Green Building Committee of the local home builders' association and is a National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Green Building Professional.

The building of "environmentally responsible" new homes was up by 30 percent, according to the NAHB.^E

The NAHB has developed a National Green Building Program based on its Green Building Guidelines (http://www.nahb.org/publication_details.aspx?publicationID=1994). These advocate many important changes to home building, addressed in six primary sections -- ranging from lot preparation and design to energy efficiency. Most of these guidelines can be achieved without altering the home's overall look and feel.

The NAHB is increasing its environmental building standards to align closer with LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and Green Building Rating System™ (the latter established by the U.S. Green Building Counsel).

“A green home doesn’t necessarily need a sod roof or solar panels,” Styczynski adds. “But we do need to encourage homeowners and builders to be more responsible to the environment by making achievable and affordable changes in the way we design and build homes.”

DiCosola has built more than 100 residential and commercial structures. With a focus on custom-built homes, client satisfaction and providing an 18-month warranty on his work, DiCosola has seen a 500 percent increase in business in 2008 from last year. He holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in science, and is now incorporating NAHB Green Building Guidelines into the new homes he constructs throughout the Chicagoland area.

^A Florida Green Builders Coalition, <http://www.floridagreenbuilding.org/db/>

^B Green Development Standard, *Florida Green Builders Commission*, www.floridagreenbuilding.org/db

^C Green Homes 101, www.greenhomeguide.org/what_makes_a_green_home/green_homes_101.html

^{D, E} “Green as Houses,” *The Economist*, 13 September 2007, http://www.economist.com/world/na/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9804157

Contacts

Jason Sherman / [Chicago Public Relations Agency](http://www.chicagopublicrelations.com)

SHERMAN communications & marketing, inc.

708-445-8598

jason@shermancm.com

<http://www.shermancm.com>



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June 17, 2008 08:15 AM Central Daylight Time

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