



Learning the benefits of a **BUILT GREEN** home

Built Green Colorado is a voluntary program run out of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Denver. It works statewide to encourage builders to use practices, products and techniques that initiate energy efficiency, durability, comfort and better indoor air quality for homes and homebuyers, explains Traci D'Alessio, State Coordinator for Built Green Colorado.

She says a good builder doesn't necessarily have to be part of the Built Green program to build a high-performance home, but Built Green ensures, by a third-party verifier, that it is being built to a certain standard. "That is one way (a buyer knows) what he is getting in a home," states D'Allesio.

"Doing a good thing for the environment" is just one of the benefits of Built Green, says D'Alessio. "By utilizing the right materials, the way they're constructed and put together, you're going to help save resources."

Another benefit is an immediate cost savings to the consumer, which is very important now that a 75 percent increase in energy bills has been announced for this winter. Though most people express interest in environmental issues, D'Alessio says people express the most interest in saving money and energy.

"They do care about pollution," she adds. "but one of the most important things, I think, a Built Green, high-performance



This home at 677 Tranquil Trail, proudly displays its Built Green certification marker near the front entrance (below). Left, below, signs throughout the home point out specific Built Green features, such as the high-efficiency heating and cooling systems.

homebuilder can give you is a more comfortable home." An energy-efficient home is constructed in a way so the air flow is balanced. "You don't get cold rooms or hot rooms," adds D'Alessio.

Also, some mortgage companies make "energy-efficient mortgages" available. This means a buyer can qualify for a larger home due to the cost savings on the utility bills. A certificate is a way to prove that, and with energy prices going up, "that's probably going to be pretty significant in the future. Look for that," she says.

Built Green Colorado has been working extensively on the Front Range, and D'Alessio says there are about 4,500 homes per year registering with the program. In just the last three or four years, she has seen builders go from not knowing or caring about green building, to "This is the way we are going to build for the future, because we do care about

what we provide for our homeowners - and we do care what we leave for future generations."

The program is just beginning to receive recognition by Western Slope builders and homebuyers. D'Alessio believes this is due to the "lack of an

on-going presence" of Built Green staff in the area. A few builders are stepping out and committing to building green homes both in Grand Junction and Montrose areas. The HBA of Northwestern Colorado is getting behind the movement, as well as energy companies like Delta-Montrose Electric Association which "is very much in support of high-performance homebuilding and renewable energy utilized within the home," says D'Alessio.

Pam Paris, Executive Officer of the HBA, says, "It's an excellent program. It has to be consumer-driven for the builders to take a strong interest in it, but I know that's where future construction will go because of the cost savings to the consumer. In reality, with the program itself, to do energy efficient homes is not that much more costly." She adds, "It's an education process."

Built Green standards include 22 categories with more than 190 items which builders can incorporate into a new home. Set on a numbering



system, the various items, like high-efficiency furnaces, hot water heaters, and radiant-heat flooring are given points. To be certified Green Built, a home must have a minimum of 70 points.

Gary Poush, who with wife Sandy Door, owns Serra Construction, is a local builder committed to building green. Their Built Green home at 677 Tranquil Trail in the Independence Ranch Subdivision was featured in last month's HBA Fall Tour of Homes. Poush has been "building green" for two years, but this is the first home certified through the Built Green program.

He's been in construction since college. His education was in zoology, however, and he says, "I've had an interest in the natural world for a long time." Because he believed in the green concept, and because resources are being depleted faster than they're being replaced, it was a natural inclination on my part to get involved in green building," he explains.

The Tranquil Trail home is "really, really tight," Poush says. To qualify as Green Built, it had to be rated by the



From left to right: Pam Paris, Executive Director, HBA of Northwestern Colorado; Gary Poush & Sandy Dorr, Serra Construction; Traci D'Alessio, Coordinator, Green Built Colorado; Ron Jens, Broker/Associate, COLDWELL BANKER Home Owners Realty

Energy Star[®] program, using a "blower-door test." The home was completely sealed and a blower put on one door. Negative pressure was applied to see how much air exchange occurs, and it took several hours for just one air exchange because there are so few leaks in the home, he explains.

"Wet-blown cellulose" insulation was used to seal the cavities in the walls completely. This insulation has a high-R value; it's fire and mold resistant. Plus, it's a recycled product made from newspaper and

cardboard, so it takes very little energy to produce the product in the first place. "It out-performs fiberglass insulation dramatically," Poush adds, citing side-by-side comparisons of both products done by the Department of Energy. The cellulose outperformed the fiberglass by 20 to 30 percent.

Though the costs of building green may be a little higher (i.g., the cellulose insulation adds about \$1,000), "there are considerable (energy) savings over the course of the year, so payback on it is not too

far out."

When walking into a Built Green home, "it looks like every other house," says Poush. "There's nothing outstandingly different that you can see in terms of the green features." People may not grasp the significance of what it means until they have lived in it a while, he explains, not "until they see their energy bills, or if someone has allergies." With a tight house, "we have to clean up the materials," such as no formaldehyde in the floors. "Human health is one of the

primary benefits of the program," he adds. The other two areas are energy efficiency and the wise use of resources.

For anyone wanting to learn more about the Built Green program, check the Website: www.builtgreen.org, or contact Traci D'Alessio at 719-339-9639. Or check the Serra Website: www.serrahomes.com. For more information about the Built Green home, contact Marketing Agent Ron Jens at COLDWELL BANKER Home Owners Realty, 970-243-0456.