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ENERGY EFFICIENCY RANKS #1 IN CONSUMER GREEN BUILDING PRIORITIES

National Green Building Program Anticipates Home Buyer Demands

A new survey conducted for the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) confirms that a desire for greater energy efficiency drives consumers to choose a green-built home.

"Green building is the home buyer's best defense against soaring energy costs," said NAHB President Brian Catalde, a Southern California home builder. "But it's up to the nation's home builders to make sure the cure is not more expensive than the problem itself. The NAHB National Green Building Program paves the way for authentic yet cost-effective green building," he said.

The voluntary program, based on the three-year-old NAHB Model Green Home Building Guidelines, is set to launch Feb. 14 at the International Builders' Show® in Orlando.

"New technologies, advances in building science and materials for insulation, windows and other components mean that homes are significantly more energy efficient than they used to be," Catalde said. "Still, it's time to take that next step. The NAHB National Green Building Program does that - and more."

The survey was conducted the week of Oct. 15 by the respected national polling firm Public Opinion Strategies.

When 800 registered voters were asked how important certain items would be in their decision to either purchase a new green home or remodel their current home to be more green, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of consumers polled said that "reduced energy costs" would be the most important. The second-highest scoring reason, at 55 percent, was "because it would be healthier." And 49 percent of those surveyed say it's "the right thing to do for the environment."

"That's a pretty strong showing for altruism," said Neil Newhouse, partner with Public Opinion Strategies. "But cost is the overriding concern. That's something that all green players - builders, regulators and advocates - need to keep topmost in their minds."

Catalde agreed. "A big reason why home buyers choose energy efficiency as a motivator is because heating and air conditioning bills can really empty our wallets," he said. "For the same reason, affordability is a prime motivation for the NAHB National Green Building Program. Our builders want to provide credible, cost-effective green building, so more home buyers' money can go to green features, not green program fees."

The NAHB National Green Building program is being launched in cooperation with the NAHB Research Center, the industry's leading building science technology testing institution working to make homes more durable, efficient and affordable.

To be certified under the NAHB program, homes must meet energy-efficiency levels that are at least equivalent to Energy Star®, the federal Environmental Protection Agency program that has enjoyed great success in the marketplace. Since 2000, 750,000 homes have earned the Energy Star label, indicating that they are at least 15 percent more efficient than required by current energy codes.

However, said Catalde, energy use is not the whole picture. "We need to think about water efficiency, resource efficiency and indoor environmental quality. We need to build green."

"When a green home doesn't look or feel significantly different from one built using more traditional construction methods, when builders have the tools and resources to build them without significant materials or labor cost increases, and when consumers readily accept the finished product, then green has arrived - and that's why the NAHB National Green Building Program will bring green to the mainstream," Catalde said.

The NAHB National Green Building program will link dozens of successful state and local voluntary green building programs with a national online scoring tool for builders and verifiers and extensive educational resources. "A flexible, regionally appropriate approach is preferable to a unilateral approach that does not take into account local issues, architecture, or geographic differences," Catalde said. "This program opens up the opportunity for all our membership to build green."

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