

Understanding Our Environment

What Does It Mean To Build Green

by *Michael V Draper*

(NAPSA)—While most of us know that green building is good for the environment, creates healthier living and work spaces, and lowers operating costs, not everyone knows exactly what it means to build green.

According to the Green Building Initiative (GBI), a nonprofit organization formed to help educate builders and consumers, there's no one-size-fits-all approach. But a green structure will adhere to certain fundamental principles, whether it's a home, school, industrial park or office tower. For example:

- Green buildings are energy efficient. In addition to saving money, this helps to minimize pollution (including carbon dioxide emissions, which are a major cause of global warming).

- They're water efficient, which is becoming increasingly important as the population—and demand—grows. Last year, a group of U.S. mayors conducted a survey and found that 40 percent of their cities won't have an adequate supply of water in 20 years.

- They're resource efficient. Among other things, this means using fewer materials, choosing recycled content materials, using wood that's certified as having come from a sustainably managed forest, and reducing waste.

The financial benefits of building green include utility companies offering cash incentives to encourage energy and water efficiency, while different levels of government offer tax deductions



THIS GREEN HOME IS BEING CONSTRUCTED USING ENERGY-EFFICIENT AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY BUILDING TECHNIQUES.

and other incentives such as fast-tracking the building approval process.

What To Look For

For information on what to look for in a green-built home, the National Association of Home Builders' Model Green Home Building Guidelines (www.nahb.org) are an excellent resource. For commercial structures, the Green Globes system is a user-friendly online tool for designing green buildings and assessing their performance over time. In fact, a recent University of Minnesota green building study concluded Green Globes "better integrates lifestyle thinking into its rating system"—meaning that it measures the impact of a building throughout its existence. Modules for New Construction and the Continual Improvement of Existing Buildings are available on the GBI Web site at www.thegbi.com.

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