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Residential Green Building—Taking Root in California

Home Buyers Now Have a Choice to Buy Green

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WATER SMART LANDSCAPING: A feature of the Green Builder Program. (Victory Homes)

LOS ANGELES—There is much more attention being paid these days for the need to protect our environment, to lower energy costs, and to go "Green." Commercial buildings have previously taken the lead in green construction but now home buyers have the option in a growing number of areas to buy green-friendly single family houses.

There is a green builder program in California that is recognized by the California Energy Commission and the California League of Cities. It is called the California Green Builder (CGB) program.

A CGB certified home must meet five criteria: energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, wood conservation, and indoor air quality.

Don Mull, Program Director of CGB, says "The objectives of the Green Builder Program are twofold. One is to provide a resource effective and cost effective Green Building Program designed by production builders for production builders. Second, is to certify a large number of homes that save energy, water, wood, and improve indoor quality and substantially reduce the amount of solid waste burden on local landfills.

"What we are looking for is a 15% reduction in energy use compared to California's Title 24 energy code, that is one of the most stringent in the US; 20,000 gallons per year water savings compared to a comparable code compliant house built in the same area at the same time; a reduction in the amount of wood used in the construction of the house, equivalent to about 1 tree for a 2,000 square foot house; and a reduction of at least 50% of the job site created solid waste that ends up going to the landfill.

"I think green building will grow faster than the general market because builders are looking for an edge against

their competitors and California Green Builder gives them a measurably better product.

"More information can be found on www.CAGreenBuilder.org , and the "builders" and "communities" pages list the builders and projects that are certified," says Mull.

Green Homes in Victorville

One of the CGB builders is Victory Homes with their Green Built Homes located in Victorville, CA near the corner of Ottawa and 7th.

Lars Dennert is the Executive Director of Victory Homes. Dennert says "Green Building for single-family residential housing is an idea whose time has come. The home buyer gets a house that is less expensive to operate and can be purchased at about the same price for a non-green built house."

Dennert Answers Questions by *The Epoch Times* Regarding the Green Building Program:

Epoch Times (ET): How much do the Green Builder enhancements add to the price of the home?

Lars Dennert (LD): Green building enhancements vary for every builder depending on the size, type and location of home. The Green Building Program changes a bit every year becoming a better program as more options become feasible. Every builder has a choice of several Green features they can implement to qualify under the program.

My estimation is that Green features add between \$5,000 to \$10,000. However, the Green Building process has become so integrated in the way we build homes that we no longer consider it a separate option for our Buyers. We consider it as permanent a feature as the roof.

We sell a Green home for the same price as other builders sell non-green. The added features and value will also make the home more attractive to a potential buyer at resale time."

ET: What is meant by the term Green Builder?

LD: "Green Building is quite possibly the newest topic in the building industry. Currently there is no Federal Standard for Green Building. Only a few years ago there was only the EnergyStar program for homes. Individual States began to adopt Green Building programs that went beyond the Federal EnergyStar standards.

The California program is properly referred to as The California Green Builder Program. Like EnergyStar it is an optional or voluntary program for Builders to participate in. Also like EnergyStar it is an official designation requiring third party inspection of the installed systems.

We use the Consol, Inc. as our rater and inspector just as we did when we only did EnergyStar. There is some pending legislation to establish an ISO standard for Green Building. When this happens, we will see a unification of the many State run programs."

ET: What are the energy savings relative to the cost of going green?

LD: It's important to keep in mind that Green Building is about more than energy savings. EnergyStar by itself can address energy savings. In addition to houses that are 15% more efficient than typical new houses in our area we are 50% above the National Energy code. Green Building also addresses water, waste recycling and environmental impact.

Some years ago we worked with the Victor Valley Water District to pilot a drought tolerant landscape model that used 40% less water than a conventional home for landscaping.

That was a big cut in usage, especially since our homes are located in the High Desert. Today, our landscape uses

roughly 10% of the landscape water used by a conventionally landscaped home. It is difficult to assess how much someone will save on their bills because, ironically, a family that uses a great deal of energy will save a greater portion by moving into a Green home than a single person.

ET: What is the cost of a 3 bedroom 2 bath Victory home? How does the price compare to non-green homes?

LD: Our base home, which is a single-story 2,014 square foot home on a generous lot, is built as a 3, 4 or 5 bedroom with 3 baths. Prices start at \$329,900 which is price competitive with non Green Built homes in the City of Victorville.

ET: How many homes has Victory Homes built?

LD: "Victory Homes, Inc. has been in business since 1977. We have built everything from apartments and starter homes to high end custom homes as well as numerous light commercial projects. Our staff has been involved in the construction of thousands of units throughout our careers. We prominently have pictures of actual homebuyers sprinkled throughout our website at www.VictoryHomesInc.com ."

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