LANDED GENTRY
HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

Landed Gentry has been building homes and neighborhoods in the Pacific Northwest since 1979, with a focus on lasting quality, extended customer service, and community involvement.

Building Success 101

Q: What is "greenwashing"?

A: As "green building" becomes a more popular term and method for housing, more products claim to provide ecological or resource-efficient benefits and features. Sometimes, such claims are dubious or at least overstated.

The term "greenwashing" refers to a product or supplier in which the environmental benefit is minor, requires more energy to create and supply than it saves, or is simply unfounded and unproven.

Thinking Green

It used to be called a cottage industry, but interest and awareness in environmentally sensitive or "green building" has achieved mainstream status among professional builders and homebuyers.

There's no doubt that construction leaves an environmental footprint. By its nature homebuilding uses resources such as land and materials, as well as energy, water, and other resources. But during the last 30 years, there has been significant improvement in residential design, construction, materials, products, and systems to shrink that footprint. Professional builders are looking into environmental friendly strategies to lessen housing's impact on the environment.

In addition, a few cities and states regulate construction on environmentally sensitive parcels, such as near wildlife habitats. That being said, prevailing building codes neither specify the use of specific "green" products nor require homes to achieve a certain level of environmental impact. Instead, an increasing number of national and local green building programs and guidelines exist to help homebuyers and builders understand their options with regards to green building.

Even without such guidelines, many builders are building green to varying degrees. By increasing a home's insulation to help reduce energy costs, for instance, a builder reduces the amount of energy the house consumes - and also the resources needed to produce and supply that energy. By installing low-flow toilets and other water-saving appliances and faucets, a builder is helping conserve a vital natural resource. Though many environmentalists focus on timber harvesting as a symbol of environmental impact, the fact is that wood-based products, including wall studs, floor beams, and roof trusses needed for the home's structural frame, are manufactured from a renewable natural resource: trees.

In addition, improved engineering of composite lumber products further reduces the impact housing construction has on our forest resources. High-tech factories allow lumber suppliers to get more useful products out of each tree and lessen the number of finished lumber components. These include studs and floor joists. In addition, so-called "advanced framing" techniques further reduce the amount of lumber needed for home construction and also make room for additional energy-saving and resource-efficient methods and materials.

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Another component of green building is products and systems that improve indoor air quality. These products regulate and refresh indoor air, remove natural and common pollutants, and reduce and vent moisture. Many of the mechanical and passive systems once used exclusively for homeowners with allergies and other sensitivities are now in the mainstream.

There are an ever growing number and variety of building products and finishes, from engineered lumber to low-voltage lighting, that are more prevalent and popular. Their move into the mainstream is due to the public's interest in reducing environmental impact, and they are steadily more affordable and available to builders. Research indicates clearly that homebuyers prefer "green" products and houses, but only if such measures do not significantly add to the price of their new house; slowly but surely, the price and supply of environmentally sensitive products is becoming competitive.

As more "green" products, finishes, and systems enter the market, they will begin to show up in virtually all types of houses and in every price range. As professional builders, we're always interested in ways to build better homes, increase housing value, and exceed client expectations, including a concern for the environment.

Warm regards,

Brian

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