Build Smart; Build Green

Go green. Build green. Live Green. Green is everywhere. The trend in housing is building green, but what does that really mean, how much will it actually cost and does it come at the sacrifice of luxury? I endeavored to tackle these questions and find some answers.

The simplest definition: green building is a way that minimizes the impact on the environment, is both cost effective and energy efficient and creates a healthy living atmosphere. As energy prices continue to climb and more people become aware of their personal impact on the environment, green building has moved from the fringe to the mainstream of the construction industry.

But how do I know that green's not just a paint color? Well, a program now exists. LEED for Homes[1], the industry gold standard, provides official green building certification for homes, guaranteeing the homeowner and any potential future buyers that nationally accepted standards have not only been met, but also third-party verified. While a green building certification is not required to 'build green', it does have some distinct advantages.

Aside from lessening the impact on the environment, one of the clear advantages lies in the cost savings. While there are fees for testing and verification for a LEED Certified home, the net benefits makes these costs negligible. On average, these homes use 15-100% less energy annually than a traditionally built home. "Any builder can just throw a bunch of solar panels on the roof and help reduce energy bills each month; however, there are more economic ways of approaching home energy efficiency by addressing all the 'systems' within a home. When approached from a holistic perspective, building an energy efficient home can be very cost-effective." states Jeremy Meek, Sustainability Programs Manager for Desert Star Construction.

Moreover, the news that LEED Certified homes sell up to 18% faster and are worth 28-37% more per square foot provides a nice layer of icing on the cupcake. [2]

1 U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a 501 c3 non-profit organization committed to a prosperous and sustainable future for our nation through cost-efficient and energy-saving green buildings

The next question to tackle was design. Green building, in my mind, is often associated with a minimalistic, no-frills, functional design. Was it possible to still build green and not sacrifice on the luxury amenities?

Yet again, my paradigm was shattered. A plethora of innovative designs and technologies are available that meet the standards of green building, while also satisfying the aesthetic palette of each distinct homeowner and delivering state of the art luxury.

The case for building green was mounting. The evidence was strong. It was while sifting through what I had learned, that the revelation hit: building green improves the quality of *my* life. From the 325% increase in interior air filtration[3] to the additional dollars in my wallet due to energy savings, to the knowledge that my carbon footprint has diminished; all these pieces were impacting my life in a positive way. And I liked that.

Fortunately, here in the Valley we have a builder who builds green and is experienced with LEED for Homes certification. Desert Star Construction, an award winning builder of LEED Certified homes and the first builder to bring a LEED Certified project to Paradise Valley, is dedicated to building green. "*We believe in building green so our clients can live green*" remarks Jerry Meek, President of Desert Star Construction. Currently, Team DSC® has four LEED Certified projects under construction, two of which are in the prestigious Silverleaf community.

My mantra? Build Green.

For more information on Desert Star Construction visit: www.desertstarconstruction.com.

2 June 2007 study by GreenWorks Realty, Build Green of King and Snohomish Counties, Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes, Cascadia Region Green Building Council, and other industry leaders.

3 Average home MERV value of 4. Maximum LEED MERV value of 13. This yields a 325% increase of LEED over the average home.