

The HBA of Bucks & Montgomery Counties Launched Keystone Green Building Initiative on September 26

(Article from the Nov/Dec 2006 HBA Reporter)

About 90 builders, contractors and architects were among the attendees on September 26 at the launching of the Keystone Green Building Initiative (KGBI), a new program created by the HBA to instill awareness and facilitate practical approaches to green construction. The seminar also included a tour of HBA member Dave Hartke's house, under construction in Doylestown. Hartke is construction his home utilizing green building certification standards.

Carl Seville, an award winning green builder, consultant, educator and writer from Decatur, GA was the keynote speaker and shared his knowledge and experiences with the group. The purpose of the program, Seville noted, is to sell home builders, and home buyers, on the benefits of environmentally friendly building practices.

Former HBA president Jim Moulton and Dave Hartke, member so the Keystone Green Building Initiative task force, introduced specifics of certification, based on a point system. Kelly O'Brien of the Green Building Initiative, an organization that assists HBAs across the country develop local programs, also spoke. Green building, in short, is a catch-all phrase that describes environmentally friendly construction. It embraces various aspects of homes, from planting energy-saving shade trees to installing water-efficient plumbing. Though driven by a goal to reduce damaging environmental impact on residential construction, equally important objectives are family safety and good health.

According to a survey of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) conducted earlier this year by McGraw Hill Construction and the association, after several years of slow, but steady growth, green building is moving into the mainstream at a rapid pace. "Green building is at a tipping point among the builder population," says Harvey Bernstein, vice president of Industry Analytics and Alliances for McGraw Hill Construction. He predicts that the next two years will represent a greater majority of involved builders.

In addition to Moulton of Moulton Builders and Hartke, of Stampfl Hartke Associates, the committee is comprised of Howard Cooper, HBA executive director, Jim Steele, S&G Water Conditioning, David DeLuca, Ryan Homes, Mike Swerdlhoff, Swerdlhoff Properties, Inc., Peter Stanthorpe, Builder/Architect magazine, and Ed Howard, McGrann Associates.

This fact-finding team researched green building programs throughout the U.S. Jim Moulton recalls frequent discussions concerning green building principles in mid-Western and Southern states. "We particularly liked standards used in Atlanta, Georgia. The new program offers a point system allowing builders to participate and be rewarded at three levels, bronze, silver and gold," explains Moulton.

"KGBI is about more than saving energy, which is only one of seven points," continues Moulton. "Builders will be evaluated on a series of green requirements including site selection, resource, energy and water efficiency, indoor environmental quality, innovation and homeowner education. Several custom builders probably come close to achieving bronze levels," he points out.

The first Green home featured in KGBI's kickoff belongs to Hartke. "Our 1940s home in Havertown wastes a lot of energy and it is just not efficient. The KGBI home, which is twice the size, will use about one-quarter of the energy," anticipates Hartke. He and his family will move in late this year.

Hartke's overall home design has a minimal footprint and uses fewer materials by locating second floor bedrooms within the roof system. The design is also contextually sympathetic to fit Doylestown, dotted by both one-story and two-story homes. A large front porch orients the house toward a walkable neighborhood and attracts outdoor living activities that require no mechanical air conditioning. Green sustainable attributes range from natural drought-resistant vegetation landscaping to pervious patio and driveway surfaces. There are rain barrels at roof downspouts to collect storm water for irrigation, a rain garden to gather storm water and infiltrate it back into water-bearing rock or stratum. Interior and exterior construction features are recyclable, highly energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

“Green homebuilding isn’t necessarily about state-of-the-art technology and innovative design,” insists Hartke. “Many of the ideas behind it are simple and have been around for decades, even centuries. The backbone of the movement is simply using environmentally harmonious principles when building a house. It’s all about utilizing alternative materials and construction methods that have minimal environmental impact. Creating healthy ecologically friendly spaces through the use of sustainable and r e c y c l a b l e resources, native vegetation and energy efficient systems is what we hope to achieve with KGBI,” promises Hartke.

HBA reports that KGBI is directed to builders to promote practical approaches to green construction. It will help them leverage the trend and make their businesses stand out in the marketplace. KGBI builders will receive co-branded marketing materials, educational programs and have the opportunity to participate through public relations and advertising.

“Builders can little by little change the paradigm and save a ton of energy over the years,” says Hartke. “It should be easier now to turn the tide because of escalating energy prices. I think as we move forward with KGBI, the industry and consumers will be eager to get on board. If homebuyers ask for green homes, builders will build. If builders build green homes, buyers will buy. I believe this program is the one that will work,” concludes Hartke.

To learn more about Keystone Green Building Initiative, call **215.657.1300** or visit **www.thegbi.org/keystone** or **www.hbahomes.com**.