

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Build Reliably Green in Florida with FGBC Certification

ORLANDO, Fla. - Back in the 1980s when consumers demanded green building, they expected an energy-efficient home. Today green means a lot more.

Consumers want energy and water efficiency, healthy indoor air, durable materials, sustainable construction, and yards with native plants. And, they want their green homes tied to eco-friendly neighborhoods, commercial buildings and cities.

It gets more complex. Sustainable building in Florida—where humidity, termites and hurricanes abound—is not the same as sustainable building in the arid Southwest or frigid Northeast.

So, how do Floridians go reliably green?

The answer lies at the heart of the Florida Green Building Coalition's (FGBC) mission. In 2000 FGBC brought together local stakeholders from the construction, government, academic and research communities to create green standards tailored specifically to Florida.

FGBC's five certifications provide pathways to build green homes, developments, local governments, high rises and commercial buildings. Today FGBC is by far the largest certifier of green homes, communities and local governments in Florida.

Florida green certified homes are fortified against hurricanes, sealed against moisture, ventilated to curb mold, and filtered for fresher air.

"There are a lot of things we've put in place that you won't find in the national standards," said FGBC executive director C.J. Davila. "It's very stringent."

National standards like USGBC LEED, Green Globes and the Green Standard from the National Association of Home Builders also move contractors towards environmentally-friendly building.

But, Florida Green are the only standards developed with climate-specific criteria. They address Florida's hot-humid environment, topography and natural disasters.

Florida Green stresses disaster mitigation, such as safe rooms, proper securing of outdoor items so that they won't become flying debris, and close-cell insulation that ties the roofing structure together.

While Florida green adds guidelines for hurricane-force winds and floods, it leaves out the costly guidelines for cold-climate weatherization that national standards require.



Not all aspects of green building are more expensive, either. Some green materials cost less than non-green, said Ralph Locke, president of Environmental Construction & Consulting. Compare recycled ZIP System sheathing, at \$18 to \$23 per sheet, to plywood at \$25 to \$28.

Overall, Florida green certification adds less than five percent to the cost of a home, Locke said. Homeowners will make up the extra cost over time with lower electric bills and insurance premiums.

FGBC's certification process, including low builder fees, is often more affordable than other certifications. The free market aspect of FGBC certifiers keep costs low.

The forms and manuals are free and can be downloaded directly from FGBC's website. A small group of local third-party certifiers perform the inspections, and builders often work with the same people repeatedly. That makes it easy for builders to learn the requirements, Davila said.

That's good news for Florida builders who want to get in on the country's growing trend towards green.

More than half of U.S. builders expect to include green in over 60 percent of their projects by 2020, a survey by Dodge Data & Analytics said. Millennials have long been rumored to be behind the push towards green. But the largest demand for green has come from people 55 and older.

Though builders say the cost to go green has been rising, so has the amount customers are willing to pay for it. In 2015, 45 percent of builders said their customers were willing to pay a premium of five percent or more for a green home. In 2011, only a third of builders said customers were willing to pay that much.

While consumers are driving green's growth, many builders believe it's also right thing to do. Green is more than an environmental standard, said FGBC president Jeremy Nelson. It says you've built a quality home.

"If you just build to code, you're building the worst building allowed by law," Nelson said. "Green building ends up being a more durable product. It's what you want to be putting your name on."

FGBC's five green certifications are powerful because they complement one another, Nelson said. Together, they can transform entire communities into environmentally sustainable places.

Developments certified as green combine habitat conservation with walkable neighborhoods and easy access to schools, recreation and businesses. There are developers who already embrace that type of design, said Rob Vieira, a building scientist for the UCF's Florida Solar Energy Center. FGBC's green development certification recognizes them for doing so.

FGBC's green government standard gives cities and counties a way to lead by example in the green movement. Governments in Florida have earned the certification by doing such things as recycling water from chiller plants, installing electric car charging stations, and swapping out standard lights for LEDs.

The Florida certification is vital guidance for any city leader who wants to become a green champion, Vieira said.

"They don't have to come up with their own program for how to do this. The program already exists," he said.

Overall, an FGBC certification offers many benefits to the builder, developer, homeowner and municipality. They include:

Energy Performance – Exceeds code requirements, while reducing monthly energy bills and greenhouse gas emissions.

Water Conservation – Reduces water usage both inside and outside the home, while decreasing monthly water bills and saving one of the state's threatened resources.

Site Conservation – Minimal site disturbance and the use of drought tolerant native plants. These lessen water bills, ease yard work and create wildlife habitat.

Healthier Homes and Buildings – Use of products, technology and materials that create a healthier indoor environment. For example, improving moisture control and indoor air quality with low VOC materials and better air filtration systems.

Materials – Use of locally-produced, resource-efficient materials and recycled content. This improves durability and protects the environment.

Disaster Mitigation – Build to withstand natural disasters, such as hurricanes and wildfires and pests, such as termites.

Contact the Florida Green Building Coalition at (407) 777-4914, e-mail info@floridagreenbuilding.org or visit www.floridagreenbuilding.org for more information.