

Green Building the Next Step for the Remodeling Industry

By Walt Hibner, Executive Director
Home Builders Association of Dayton

In keeping with the National Association of Home Builders declaration of May being remodeling month and with everything coming up green during spring, there is no reason your existing home can't be "green" also. I am not referring to painting your home a new color. I am referring to a way you can improve the world we live in, operate a more efficient and healthy home and put some "green" back into your pocket.

Homeowners want their remodeling projects green and remodelers are answering the call, according to recent research by NAHB Remodelers released at the National Green Building Conference in St. Louis last month.

"The only way to bring green into 120 million existing households is through remodeling," said NAHB Remodelers Chair Mike Nagel, CGR, CAPS, a remodeler from Chicago. "Americans spent over \$230 billion last year in home remodeling, with energy-efficient and sustainable products representing an increasing share of the market."

More than one quarter of remodelers surveyed by NAHB saw growing demand for green remodeling late last year, compared to just 6% reporting declining demand. The majority of remodelers already incorporated energy efficiency into their work. Nearly all (85%) have said they used low-energy windows, 68% used insulated exterior doors, 65% upgraded insulation and 56% installed high-efficiency HVAC systems.

The survey also showed that many remodelers use environmentally friendly products. For example, more than 75% of those surveyed said they were contributing to minimizing harvesting from old-growth forests by using alternatives to dimensional lumber, like engineered wood. Additionally, 65% said they already incorporate recycled or recyclable materials into their projects.

For the first time, the National Green Building Conference held remodeling educational courses for contractors. One of those instructors, Michael Strong, CGR, CAPS, GMB, a member of the NAHB Green Building Subcommittee, discussed the emerging trends within the industry.

"Energy efficiency continues to lead the way, but for items beyond appliances, the installation matters as much as the product," Strong said. "Simply putting in that low-E window doesn't solve the problem. Home owners need to look at the whole room and eventually use a whole-house approach to maximize efficiency."

NAHB Remodelers offer a "Top Eight" list for home owners:

- Install maximum insulation in the area to be remodeled.
- Install high-efficiency windows instead of those that just meet the energy code.
- Seal all exterior penetrations in the area being remodeled.
- Purchase only Energy Star®-rated appliances.
- Install only low-flow water fixtures.
- Upgrade to an Energy Star®-rated water heater, or better yet a tankless water heater.
- Purchase the highest efficiency HVAC system you can afford.

So it's time to put down the green paint samples and brushes and find a remodeler that can add some green to your home while helping you improve the world we live in, operate a more efficient and healthy home and put some "green" back into your pocket.

For more information about remodeling, visit www.nahb.org/remodel.