

Did 'Green' survive the recession?

By TOM BLACKBURN RODRIGUEZ

Before 2008 there was a growing movement for the greening of homes, with solar hot water heating, photovoltaic panels, water conserving landscapes, additional insulation, energy saving appliances, reflective paint, double paned windows and a view of buying a home that would provide affordable sustainability over the long-term.

Did that move toward green, energy efficient and sustainable housing survive the recession?

Laurie Lee is with Pacific Island Realty, representing the Stanford Carr Development in new home sales in Wailuku at the Kehalani development. She is one of nearly 50 people attending a popular class on "Greening the Housing Market: Green Home Basics," offered by the Realtors Association of Maui in partnership with Green Building LLC.

At the conclusion of the class, participants will be able to provide historical and environmental perspectives of the green building industry, identify benefits of a green home with respect to energy, water, indoor air quality, durability and materials and resources; explore building science and technologies found in a high performance home; and find and use online resources to continue learning about the green home.

Lee's experience is that buyers coming into Kehalani



TOM BLACKBURN RODRIGUEZ photo

Jean Young (standing right), of Green Building LLC, explains the concepts behind Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEEDS) Certification. Along with John Bendon (not shown), Young is teaching a class on "Greening the Housing Market: Green Home Basics," to members of the Realtors Association of Maui (RAM). It is one of RAM's most popular classes.

are definitely conscious of energy savings and one of the key things that is important to them are solar heating sys-

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tems for hot water.

"In new homes the assumption is that we will have energy saving appliances," she said. "Right now, the buyers are trying to keep their payments down as much as possible, so they're expecting or hoping that developers can put in the solar hot water heater at no additional cost and that's usually the first thing they will ask for," she added.

A classmate of Lee's is Linda Shimokawa, Makena Wailea Real Estate, and she feels that green has definitely survived the recession. "Even more so, I would say," Shimokawa said.

"Because people are into saving money and for the long term... They want to know if the home is insulated, if it's going to save energy, if it has EnergyStar appliances, if they are updated, if they are new and will save electricity and money for them in the long term," she said.

John Bendon, is the Founding Principal of Green Building LLC, providing environmental audits, assessments, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification for buildings throughout Hawaii, among other environmental services.

"The biggest questions now are what is 'green building?' 'What is this whole green thing?' There's a lot of preconceived ideas as to what it is, there is a lot of information and misinformation on the costs for doing these sorts of things, and that is where the education component is pretty critical for us, Bendon said. "There's lots of movement in this whole direction for energy efficiency and security... We don't see it slowing down," he added.

Meghan Clair is a Realtor(S), Eco-Broker with Coldwell Banker Island Properties-Shops at Wailea. She was the first female Realtor on Maui to earn the EcoBroker designation.

Clair points out that, "Most national media will report that 'Yes,' green building is not only surviving but in fact thriving during our recent recession. It is projected to be a \$60 billion industry for 2010. Many of our trou-

bling economic factors have motivated homeowners and buyers to be more aware of their homes operating cost. Here in Hawaii, homes with better energy efficiency and features like energy star appliances and solar hot water heaters, and Photovoltaic systems have become increasingly more popular."

Marina Batham, Realtor Broker, ABR, Wailea Realty Corp. is seeing more buyers asking about energy savings and green features.

"I have found that Buyers are a lot more savvy about what to ask for. In the past we have always pointed out the solar panels, double pane windows and insulated walls, but now Buyers ask for it while viewing the home," she said.

Francesca Carey is unusual in several aspects. First as a woman developer in an industry of mostly men, and second as the President of FABMAC Homes, Inc., providing quality manufactured homes at affordable prices that include manufacturing the home,

shipping it to Maui and installing it on a buyer's lot.

She strongly markets energy efficiency and green elements in her homes. "Since our homes are very energy efficient, this is a good selling point for us. FABMAC homes are Energy Star homes with added insulation, Low-E dual pane windows, 2x6 exterior walls, cement siding, TREX decks, and these features translate directly into cost savings. We provide our buyers with an estimate of the amount of savings that they will realize over a 20-year period of home ownership as compared to a conventional home," she said.

It appears that green has survived the recession with expectations that the market for green homes and buildings will continue to grow, meeting the analysis of green projects by the author Paul Hawken in his book *Natural Capitalism*.

Hawken wrote, "Green projects typically sell or lease faster and retain tenants better, because they combine superior amenity and comfort with lower operating costs and more competitive terms. The resulting gains in occupancies, rents and residuals all enhance financial returns." □

