

Green Building: Adaption by a General Contractor

by Ken Bachman, Bachman Homes

“Green Building – that’s recycled countertops, energy-saving appliances and bamboo floors, right?” The year was 2005. Like many general contractors, I was both unaware of and uninspired to embrace it. I recycled as many cans, bottles and cardboard as anyone in the community – that part was easy. However, asking me to change our system of home construction was simply too much. I just wouldn’t do it.

After several years passed I noticed that green building was not only gaining momentum in the industry but becoming a core value among both consumers and competitors. Ignoring a trend that would soon become a standard was not an option. It was time to take a closer look. I read articles and spoke with other builders, suppliers, and manufacturers. I researched the impact to our business, in both cost and efficiency. I asked our customers how they felt about a green home, and the answer was clear: it was time to embrace green standards.

The certification process was not difficult. Within six months I completed the coursework (Business Management for Building Professionals, and Green Building for Building Professionals) and passed the tests. I found the coursework to be interesting and methodologies easy to embrace. In addition, I contacted our local verifier (inspector) and was reassured that he would be there to educate and guide us as we began our first project.

Perhaps the most gratifying part of this experience is recognizing that many of our core standards are, in fact, green standards. Only minor changes are needed for us to comply. We have built green for all these years and didn’t even know it. Our tradesmen are on board and equally excited. Expect green building standards to continue to gain momentum, not to mention inevitably becoming a CODE requirement. It’s here...and is not going away. That’s reality.

Take a minute to consider green building standards. Ask certified builders about their experience, inquire with suppliers, and use the resources of NAHB and the Central PA Builders Association. You can't expect to meet the challenges of today with yesterday's tools and expect to be in business tomorrow. In the words of Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan, *“Enjoying success requires the ability to adapt. Only by being open to change will you have a true opportunity to get the most from your talent”*.