

SPREADING THE NEWS TO BUILDERS AND ARCHITECTS

In a Down Housing Market, Green Demand Exceeds Supply

In a marketplace that continues to run cool as builders work down their unsold inventories of homes, green building and remodeling is one corner of the marketplace where demand is riding higher than the available supply, participants in an NAHB teleconference said on April 16.

Recent surveys by McGraw-Hill Construction among green home buyers and home owners who have undertaken remodeling jobs find a strong sentiment among consumers that there "are not enough green builders out there and demand is exceeding the homes available," with the shortfall particularly pronounced in the East, said Harvey Bernstein, the company's Vice President of industry analytics, alliances and strategic initiatives.

Bernstein added that green housing is a differentiator from traditional homes and "something still in demand" even during the current market correction.

Energy-efficiency is now a primary concern of housing consumers, said Gopal Ahluwalia, NAHB's Vice President of research, as the cost of energy remains high and prospective buyers are worried about how they will pay to heat and cool homes that are 50% larger than 30 years ago and growing in volume with the popularity of high ceilings.

Environmental concerns are prompting a small majority of consumers to consider the alternative of green building, Ahluwalia said, but survey and focus group research makes it "loud and clear" that buyers are willing to spend a little bit more to improve energy efficiency because this is an issue that "hits the pocketbook."

For Michael Strong, CGR, CAPS whose firm, Brothers Strong, Inc. has been remodeling homes in the Houston area for 17 years, energy efficiency has become a given and a baseline that his customers have come to expect, and he is expanding his business by educating home owners about the health benefits of building green.

Green remodeling jobs that promote a healthier home include properly sized and vented exhaust fans, the addition of fans to the laundry room, zero or low-VOC paint and the use of formaldehyde-free carpet and plywood, "getting obnoxious chemicals out of the home," he said.

Jobs emphasizing better energy efficiency include dual-flush toilets, tankless water heaters, HVAC systems with at least a 17 SEER rating, furnaces with a 90+ rating, fluorescent lighting and

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Energy Solutions

I write this between the two-year anniversaries of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The devastation of those storms stunned us all: Mother Nature's fury destroyed lives, homes, and many illusions of preparedness.

The storms were also a major catalyst for rising energy costs. In the summer of 2005, we'd already seen gas prices soar; after the storms heating a home suddenly became a challenge and people sought new ways to stretch their heating dollars.

One response to this was the launching of many new companies selling spray foam insulation. That's not surprising: people began to see what we've know for over 30 years, that foam is one of the surest ways of keeping cold out and heat in and making a home more energy efficient, as well as dry, quiet, and more structurally sound.

Many companies offer foam, which I think is great. The sudden entry of new providers in the past two years underscores the extent of our experience (and the perfection of our processes) that distinguish us in the construction world.

Nickerson-Remick began in 1976, shortly after America's first Energy Crisis. From those days of gas shortages, to our own era of green building and a striving for sustainability, we've provided an energy solution that continues to be leading-edge and effective. And we will continue to do so.

I want to thank you for your ongoing support. We continue to work hard to provide the services you need to help your customers maximize the benefits of their investment. As always, please call us toll free (800.524.1342) or send me an email (jim@nickerson-remick.com) if you have any questions or comments. We always like to hear from you.

All the best,

Jim

Featured Builder: YFI Homes

YFI CUSTOM HOMES BUILDS WEATHER-PROOF OCEANFRONT HOMES



Though he builds homes now, Glenn Farrell keeps the initials of his first company, York Financial Inc., which he founded in 1985 in York, Maine.

Farrell's background was unique: a Certified Public Accountant with finance and real estate expertise as well as a construction background. He began as a financial consultant, but soon sought a wider avenue where his practical and artistic talents could intersect.

He found that as a builder, Farrell began by building "spec" homes—those that are built first and sold later.

Over the next 20 years, the homes Farrell built would go from spec to spectacular: he now specializes in high-end, custom built homes. YFI has built houses throughout the Northeast and beyond (about 4 to 5 per year), from Boston to Falmouth, Maine, from Seabrook to Vermont and as far away as Naples, Florida.

No matter where his projects take him, one aspect of the construction remains constant: Farrell always recommends that buyers insulate their homes with Nickerson-Remick spray foam. "We recommend it and use it as often as we can," says Farrell.

Geography plays a role in this ongoing recommendation. "We build a lot of houses on water," Farrell says. "The Maine and New Hampshire seacoasts face strong and sometimes severe winds."

Such a place is on the Marginal Way along Maine's rocky coast in Ogunquit, where Farrell recently completed a thorough gutting and reconstructing of an older home. "It was the perfect project in which to use foam," says Farrell. "It was an older home, so not everything was 16-on-center; the odd angles made insulating a challenge."

Farrell recommended spray foam, which was used throughout the house, in the basement ceiling, walls and roof.

On the first day after the insulation process was complete, Farrell noticed a significant change: he felt no drafts, and heard little noise leaking in from outside. "The deadening of sounds and solidifying effect that foam gives structures are two great benefits," says Farrell.

Another is that foam requires no ridge vents, which is crucial for homes facing the ocean. "Whenever you create vents to let air escape, you let water in," says Farrell.

Convincing customers to go with foam is usually easy for Farrell, despite its higher price compared to fiberglass insulation. More people are thinking long term, and thinking green. "Recently, I've had a lot of people interested in energy savings, installing efficiency furnaces," Farrell says. "On paper, foam costs more, but we point out one significant thing: energy efficiency starts with giving the house a tighter shell."

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When customers see how foam provides that shell, they see that, in the long run, they're better off with foam, Farrell says.

One thing that makes it easy for Farrell to employ foam is his long-standing relationship with the Nickerson-Remick team.

"They're great to work with," says Farrell. "They've got a guy in the office who stays in contact with us so jobs stay on schedule, and if our schedule changes suddenly, Nickerson-Remick is very accommodating."

Farrell is so sold on foam, he'd be his own best customer, were he to rebuild his old Maine farmhouse. "If I were to rebuild, the first thing I'd put in my new home would be foam," he says.

For more information on YFI Homes, please visit www.yficustomhomes.com or call Glenn at 207.363.8053.