

A GREEN BUILDING PROGRAM FOR FACTORY-BUILT HOMES

by Jeff Inks





While uncertainty remains about when and how robust the recovery of the housing market will be, one thing is for sure, green building for residential construction is here to stay. Pushed by concerns over carbon footprints, energy costs, global warming, and other environmental concerns, enthusiasm for green building and healthy living is mushrooming nationwide.

So what does all this mean for the manufactured and modular housing industries? How will manufactured and modular homes be recognized and accepted as green homes? How can manufactured and modular home builders accelerate the adoption of green building practices into the factory-building process in order to build green homes that can reach new markets? How will our homes obtain certification of their green design?

The Manufactured Housing Institute (MHI), National Modular Housing Council (NMHC), and Manufactured Housing Research Alliance (MHRA) have teamed up to launch a green building initiative to resolve these critical issues. This initiative will involve two areas. First, a set of guidelines establishing the minimum requirements for constructing a green home and second, a certification program that provides a credible means for verifying compliance with them.

The Green Building Spectrum

No single definition of green building exists. There is very little agreement even among experts as to what exactly constitutes a comprehensive green building program. There are common principles however that most existing programs embody. These principles include the efficient use of sustainable building materials, energy and water use efficiency, indoor air quality and building site considerations such as minimizing soil disturbance and conservation of trees and other vegetation. These principles must hold true for factory-built housing as well, if it is to compete in green building markets.

As more and more consumers and communities learn about green building and consider green building programs howev-

er, the need for a model green building standard that can serve as the basis for consistent green building programs in different locations is becoming more critical. This is especially true for factory built housing given the various regions any one manufacturer may market their homes in. Consistency in green building program requirements will be a key factor in a manufacturer's ability to compete effectively in green home markets.

A Green Building Program for Manufactured and Modular Homes

This Spring, the National Association of Home Builders in partnership with the International Code Council (ICC) is publishing the first *National Green Building Standard* (NGBS). MHI and NMHC have been active participants in the development of the NGBS to ensure the interests of the factory-built sector are represented. Our participation has led to the inclusion of manufactured and modular housing definitions in the NGBS to make clear that it covers manufactured and modular housing and that the unique construction efficiencies that are realized in factory construction are given special credit for resource efficiency. In total, NGBS covers six broad areas: 1) lot design, preparation and development; 2) resource efficiency; 3) energy efficiency 4) water efficiency; 5) indoor environmental quality; and, 6) operation, maintenance and building owner education. Each home literally receives a score in each of these six areas to be considered a green home.

Manufactured and modular housing brings with it some tremendous "green" advantages. The amount of construction waste is drastically reduced through factory-construction,

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