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Local builder's own home certified as 'healthy-built'

RESIDENCE IS FIRST DESIGNATED BY PROGRAM FOCUSED ON SAVING ENERGY

JULIE BALL
STAFF WRITER
STORY

Local builder's own home certified as 'healthy-built'

Residence is first

designated by program focused on saving energy

By Julie Ball

STAFF WRITER

BLACK MOUNTAIN -- Most people don't look forward to their utility bills.

But Rob Moody doesn't mind them.

The Black Mountain home builder moved into his new house in September, and the steps he took to make the home energy efficient are paying dividends.

"This is sort of our first venture into new construction, but we want to keep it up," Moody said.

Moody's house on Cragmont Road was the first in the state certified as a "healthy-built" home by the North Carolina HealthyBuilt Homes program.

The home is designed to be energy efficient and was built using less lumber and more recycled materials.

The North Carolina Solar Center at N.C. State University coordinates the healthy- built homes program with funding from the state Energy Office.

"We're looking to help both consumers and builders create healthier homes ... create homes that are still reasonable to their pocketbook, but provide healthy environments for them to live in and continue to look at how we can use our resources more wisely," said Dona Stankus, architect and director of the program.

The program provides education and some marketing materials for participating home builders.

A healthy-built certified home can help home buyers qualify to borrow more money because of the expected energy savings.

For the builders, a selling point is fewer callbacks from home buyers, according to Stankus.

Homes are certified using a point system. Builders get points for things like using drought-resistant plants in the landscape, collecting rainwater for use in watering plants, using energy-efficient appliances and insulating the slab that the house sits on. Points are also awarded for using renewable energy sources such as solar power.

But the idea of a healthy- built home goes beyond just designing a house that is energy efficient, according to Stankus. Water efficiency, improved indoor air quality and using less toxic paints and other materials are encouraged through the program.

"Lots of people are asking for this stuff," Stankus said.

"We kind of think of it as a high-performance homes program," she said. "We look at the whole package, not just the energy piece."

A former science teacher, Moody was using those ideas with the remodeling and building work he does for his own company, **EcoBuilders**.

He designed his house with the same ideas.

Moody selectively cut trees when clearing the lot and landscaped using native plants; his roof is made using a reflective material that helps reduce the amount of heat in the home during summer; the water heater inside the home heats water on demand rather than keeping a large volume of water hot.

Moody said there are some upfront costs. The insulation he used, for example, costs twice as much as typical Fiberglas insulation.

But Moody's gas bill this winter for heating the home and running the water heater has averaged between \$40 and \$60 a month.

"We will recoup those (initial) costs over a short amount of time," Moody said.

The healthy built homes program has a goal of 3,000 certified homes like Moody's by the year 2009.

Since its launch last March, six homes besides Moody's are nearing certification. In addition, builders of another 42 homes are working toward certification. Stankus said 30 out of 42 are located in the Asheville area.

"I think the area attracts people with an environmental awareness," said Boone Guyton, who heads the WNC Green Building Council. "Building in an environmentally sensitive way sort of fits into people's ideas."

The council has helped get the word out about the certification process and environmentally responsible building practices.

Mountain Housing Opportunities has built five single-family homes and has plans for 10 condominiums using these techniques.

"We hope to help voluntarily transform the building market in North Carolina into one where the homes use less energy," Stankus said. "Over time, they cost less for people to maintain them."

Contact Ball at 232-5851 or JBall@CITIZEN-TIMES.com.

ON THE NET: www.wncgbc.org, www.ncsc.ncsu.edu/programs/North_Carolina_HealthyBuilt_Homes_Program.cfm

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