

The Vanguard home features WaterSense labeled high-efficiency toilets and low-flow faucets and showerheads. In addition, Energy Star-certified appliances and a hot water recirculation pump will also save water and energy.

“We were able to select WaterSense products from our suppliers without any problems,” says Robert Smart, vice president of construction at Vanguard Homes.

Smart says the cost of adopting the specification depends on your starting point and estimates it will cost builders an additional \$2,000 to \$3,000 to achieve the WaterSense label. However, the latter is a rough number at present. There are some additional cost-boosting steps such as insulating hot water pipes and partnering with a WaterSense irrigation partner to meet a landscape water allowance. For example, “You can only put turf on a maximum of 40% of the landscapable area and have to incorporate low-water-using shrubs and plants,” says Smart.

Stephanie Ware, director of marketing at Vanguard Homes, says home buyers want performance not just conservation, and believes their homes will appreciate at a higher rate over time.

“Our buyers get a better product—the homes are third-party certified, and they perform to a higher standard than a traditional home,” she says.

According to the EPA, if the 1.4 million new homes built each year in the United States followed WaterSense specifications, they could save more than 15 billion gallons of water and approximately \$21 billion in energy costs annually. www.epa.gov/watersense—Tracy Fox

Picking Green Winners

Choosing truly sustainable products is important to maintaining your reputation as a green builder.

When we embarked on our VISION House series of show homes years ago, we learned firsthand that vetting the best green products was key to creating authentic housing examples for builders to follow. In our latest house, the VISION House Aspen, product picks are crucial to keeping the house desirable for the luxury buyer it is designed to attract. In addition, they need to provide value and be easy to source and install. We asked Stace McGee, founder and president of EDI, the VISION house designer, how he starts the process of picking green.

GB: Say I'm a builder who's new to green. How do start the green product process?

SM: The myth of the perfect material isn't real—it's the one that doesn't get made. So you have to consider many things, like its durability and how it goes back to its natural state in the environment at the end of its life. You have to be realistic. The first thing I look at personally is: Does the company have an environmental mission statement or green collateral? How long has that company been building green? This sets the stage to understand its commitment and to look for greenwashing.

GB: And from there?

SM: People have their own values as to what to consider first. Maybe they are into recycled content, so that is the first thing they look at, and that's fine. Other people might focus on

durability or embodied energy. No matter what the specs or requirements of a job are, people are going to use their own values to decide what to do.

GB: So builders can start with their, or their buyer's, preconceived green interests?

SM: And then factor in all the other sustainable [characteristics.] Take bamboo. Everyone loves it. It's durable; when it's harvested it doesn't destroy the topsoil, and it grows back in three to five years. But once everyone in China figured out it was a money



BioGlass

“When Stace McGee looks at products for the VISION House Aspen project, design is a factor all along the way. He points to this product, BioGlass www.bioglass.org as a great example of design and sustainability working together. “It is a dead sexy, 100% recycled product. It also illustrates the choices builders need to make. The product is manufactured and bulk-shipped from Italy. “It has a higher embodied energy, but it is 100% recycled so nothing is harvested. And it is extremely durable,” he points out.

crop, they started over-harvesting. I won't use it because of labor factors and shipping.

GB: But other builders may look at all the positive factors and push the labor issue to the background?

SM: Yes. There's a lot of room for interpretation. What we try to do is explain what your options are—what you need to be thinking about so you can choose your materials. I'm going to tell you the green benefits, not what is right or wrong, and give you all the information to pick what is appropriate.

GB: How would this work with the green programs and guidelines that builders may be following?

SM: We target what our clients [builders or homeowners] want out of their sustainable project. If they have an interest in recyclable products, we target those credits in the program. Ultimately, we want the homeowner to be the champion and get behind the project. Our company is here to facilitate a design process, not to tell the client what they want—it's their home, not mine.



Eco-Terr

"Not just sexy, this product is bomb proof," says McGee. The terrazzo product, used in the VISION House Aspen, is made of recycled natural stone aggregate. It is no-VOC, non-porous, antimicrobial, and is NSCF certified. The product is made from 70% post-industrial aggregate and 5% post-industrial binder. www.ecoterr.com



Steel-Con Light Gauge Framing.

Though this was not used in the showhome, McGee points it out as a favorite material. It is 100% recycled (20% post consumer and 80% post industrial). www.steelconsystems.com

MORE PRODUCT HELP

Home builders and consumers interested in certifying their homes to NAHBGreen, the NAHB National Green Building Program, can get help finding green building materials, appliances, and fixtures.

Members of the National Council of the Housing Industry have begun to provide information about how their products' point values work with the rating system used in the National Green Building Certification process.

Builders who want to incorporate these products and features should consult with an NAHB Research Center-accredited verifier, who can confirm how their inclusion will contribute to the point total and who will inspect the results. For more information, visit www.nahbgreen.org

Save the Date

February 2009

26-28 The 2009 Dealer Conference, New Orleans

Learn about the opportunities that green building affords Icynene dealers and how that market will grow in the future. Featured keynote speaker is Green Builder Media's Ron Jones on "The Movement to Green and the New Opportunities." www.icynene.com

April 2009

1 Low-Impact Development and Green Building, Tulsa, Fla.,

The Tulsa HBA is holding a day-long conference on the future opportunities for builders in low-impact communities. www.tulsahba.com

4-6 National Propane Gas Association's 2009 Propane Expo, Atlanta

Propane is a viable green energy alternative. This conference offers comparison shopping and deal-making opportunities as well as education. Ron Jones will keynote on green building initiatives. www.propaneexpo.com

May 2009

27-29 National Green Builders Products Expo (NGBPE), Las Vegas

The "Business-To-Business" Builders Expo For Green Building Products Only! The National Green Builders Products Expo is a trade-to-trade only event that brings the buyers to manufacturers and providers of goods and services related to the initial building, remodeling, rehabilitation, or renovation of buildings, green initiative commercial, and industrial structures, as well as single and multi-family housing. www.ngpbe.com

8-10 National Green Building Conference, Dallas

Get contacts, tools, and ideas that are good for both the environment and your bottom line. The NAHB National Green Building Conference is the only national conference targeted to green building for the mainstream residential building industry. Network with designers and suppliers, attend exceptional education sessions and develop the skills you need for profitable green building. www.nahb.org

Have a green-building related event? E-mail it to editorial@greenbuildermag.com