



EcoBroker Meghan Clair identifies and promotes "green" features and practices for homes and properties on Maui.

**Jessica Baker**

Meghan Clair, Maui's first female EcoBroker, is working hard to simultaneously save the planet and save homeowners' hard-earned money. If you are interested in "going green," but have no idea where to begin, just a few everyday home improvement recommendations from our local EcoBroker will not only kick start your eco-friendly lifestyle, but can also increase the property value of your home.

An EcoBroker is an environmentally certified real estate agent. Professionally trained in energy efficiency and "green" living, these agents advise clients to help optimize their property's value while making the wisest decisions for the environment. A growing trend on the Mainland, EcoBrokers are relatively new to Maui, an island blossoming with environmentally-minded individuals.

Clair, who works with

# Green House

*Wailea EcoBroker promotes green real estate.*

Windermere Real Estate Wailea, specializes in luxury residential and investment properties in South Maui. A permanent Maui resident, she understands the desire to live comfortably in healthy, cost-effective surroundings.

"Building green is about healthier lifestyles and home style. It's about saving money and the environment," Clair explained, "and making your home healthier to occupy and less expensive to operate." Building green also increases resale values, she added.

Contrary to the current housing slump, the green construction and real estate market is on the rise, steadily gaining momentum. McGraw Hill Construction Analytics and the U.S. Green Building Council surveyed randomly selected households and found that people at all income levels are buying green homes. The value of green building construction is projected to increase from \$2 billion in 2004 to \$60 billion by 2010.

Eco-features make properties considerably more attractive to potential buyers. *Premier Magazine* published in their fall 2008 issue, "In a recent national survey... 78 percent of consumers said they would choose

one home over another based on its energy efficiency, and the majority would pay more for energy-saving features."

"In our current market, where there is a lot of inventory that is similar, showcasing eco-features is a great way to make a property stand out to a buyer, sell closer to asking price, and sell in a timely manner," said Clair.

With her designation as an EcoBroker, Clair has an advantage over other real estate agents. She highlights eco-friendly benefits for buyers and advises sellers on specific green improvements in order to earn top dollar from their home sale.

The biggest advantage for Maui homeowners in today's green market is our year-round abundance of sunshine, and the potential to "go off the grid" by generating electricity from solar panels.

"Solar panels are wonderful, but with installation costs of \$20,000 to \$40,000, they are simply not a viable option for all Maui residents," Clair explained. "A more practical alternative is the installation of a solar water heater."

According to Maui Pacific Solar Inc., water heating accounts for the largest portion of the electric bill in a typical Maui home. Over time, solar water heaters reduce electricity bills by 40 to 75 percent and energy consumption by 85 percent. They also produce absolutely no pollution.



This South Maui property with eco-features such as solar water heating, energy-efficient appliances and native vegetation landscaping is currently listed by Meghan Clair of Windermere Real Estate Wailea.

With prices starting at \$3,600, Maui residents are also eligible for new federal and state tax credits, which reduce installation costs even further. Gov. Linda Lingle signed a bill in August making solar water heaters mandatory for all new construction beginning in 2010. Clair advises that it is an opportunity



carry Energy Star appliances, with prices starting at \$500.

"In just a year, they almost pay for themselves!" said Clair.

Even small changes can make your home eco-friendly—planting fruit trees outside, bringing house plants inside, replacing light bulbs with compact fluorescents

(CFLs) and using chemical-free cleaning supplies are low-cost options. And when your home is ready to go on the market, it's these little things that "make your home unique, justify pricing and improve quality of living," said Clair.

In addition to excelling in her busy career, Clair organized group beach park cleanups and restoration in South Maui this past fall. Since 2007, she has been a team leader for green building with the Maui Chapter of Habitat for Humanity International. She also helped organize the Energy & Environment Building Association's (EEBA) Houses



Meghan Clair's eco-friendly "business card" is a reusable shopping bag, Chico bag that can hold up to 3 pounds and folds up into a tiny pouch when not in use.

That Work "Green Building" Seminar, the first lecture of its kind on Maui Clair is currently filming a TV show planned for broadcast on Akakū Maui Community Television, featuring interviews with Maui businesses involved in the green building industry.

Active in the community and passionate about preserving Maui's natural beauty, Meghan Clair is an eco-role model for all.

For further information about EcoBroker Meghan Clair, check out her blog at [www.GreenRealEstateMaui.com](http://www.GreenRealEstateMaui.com) or contact her directly at [mclair@windermere.com](mailto:mclair@windermere.com). \*



A solar water heating system at a West Maui residence uses energy from the sun to heat the family's water supply. "We never run out of hot water."