

It Pays to Think GREEN When Investing in Real Estate

By Meghan Clair



The value of green construction increased five-fold from \$10 billion in 2005 to as much as \$49 billion in 2008. Going green is no longer the future, but the present. It is essential that we all learn more about what green developments and properties are, and why they are a benefit. As Realtors, builders and consumers, it is important to be aware of and educate ourselves on the emerging green-building industry. It is beneficial to understand what costs are involved in installing and upgrading homes to become more energy efficient, which types of vendors and products are useful and what the money-saving state and federal tax benefits are for greening your home.

In a 2008 national survey, 78% of home buyers said they would choose an energy-efficient home over a traditional home *and* they would be willing to pay more for these features. This is a valuable marketing strategy in today's uncertain market.

So, what makes a home or other property green?

Green real estate refers to a property designed or built to reduce environmental impacts; create a safer, more efficient living or working environment; reduce operating cost; and improve occupant health.

Recently, going green has become not just a hot trend, but a new lifestyle choice for many, and rightly so. The reality is that

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our natural resources are limited, and as a human race we need to develop better technology and life choices for accommodating population growth and the damage caused by pollution.

In the past decade, the green trend has spread to the building and housing market and the concept is becoming increasingly more popular. What people may not know yet is that in addition to making your home healthier to occupy and less expensive to operate, implementing green features into homes is a great avenue to make them more marketable for sale.

A green home can be new construction, or can be an existing home that has been upgraded with a few eco-friendly features to help reap benefits. Almost all homes have some green features, and EcoBrokers have the certification and expertise to recognize and highlight eco-friendly features that already exist in your home to expose your home in a unique way.

Some common eco-improvements for existing homes include solar water heat-

ers, attic and wall insulation, solar attic fans, low-E windows, photovoltaic cells for converting solar energy into electricity, energy-efficient appliances or even landscaping with native plants.

If all these options are not immediate alternatives for your family, you can still make smarter choices at home to be more eco-aware. Recycle, buy compact fluorescent light bulbs, reduce your water consumption and use less electricity when possible or grow your own food!

It is a wonderful opportunity to be involved in this exciting advancement in building practices, protecting Hawaii's natural environment and promoting the benefits of thoughtful eco-friendly home designs. Building green is about healthier lifestyles and home style. It's about saving money and the environment. Going green is about taking pride in our homes and the future by making positive living choices.

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