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Home Front: Expo to give builders outlook on 'green' construction

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So-called "green" building has been one of the biggest fads in home construction for more than a year. But what does it mean and will consumers actually be willing to pay for it if it costs them more?

That's what a lot of local builders have been asking themselves.

Some of the answers are coming May 8, when the North State Building Industry Association hosts its first Green Home Expo in Sacramento. It's the first in California by a regional home builder trade group.

The daylong expo at the Sacramento Convention Center will tell builders about the newest green construction techniques and how to market and sell homes that feature them. It will show homeowners the newest ways to make their home green and how to use tax credits and utility programs to help pay for it.

This being a capital town, the expo includes panel discussions on the latest public policy trends related to green building. Many folks say they want to be green, but there are a lot of politics related to what green means.

Discussions include overviews of California's carbon and greenhouse gas emission legislation. Other panelists will talk about where subcontractors can find workers skilled in green construction.

It's free and includes a large exhibit area. The North State BIA is a Roseville-based trade group for home builders and contractors.

What buyers want

While we're on the subject, the California Energy Commission has just released results of a survey on attitudes toward buying energy-efficient homes.

Major findings in the CEC survey, run by Santa Monica-based opinion researchers Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, are:

- More than half of potential home buyers in California say they would buy a new energy-efficient solar home in order to lower monthly electric bills.
- Seventy-four percent said home builders in California should make rooftop solar systems a standard feature.
- Those most likely to buy a solar electric system are between the ages of 18 and 49, college-educated and see themselves with environmentalist leanings and a moderate to liberal political outlook.

The results come from two sources. One is a May 18-26, 2007, survey of 600 recent buyers of single-family homes in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, the Central Valley and the Sacramento region. It has a 4.1 percent margin of error. The survey also took into account several focus groups among potential home

buyers in Riverside, San Diego, Fresno and Concord.

Davis gets a nod

The newest book on where baby boomers should go when they retire suggests people check out Davis. Author Barbara Corcoran, who just published "Nextville, Amazing Places to Live the Rest of Your Life," recommends Davis as the "town of Schwinn's and shared housing."

Outside of Huntington Beach or hanging out with the winter RV crowd at Imperial County's Slab City, it's the only town in California to get a plug.

Writes Corcoran: "The community is a mix of farmers, university professors, students, natural-food lovers, and of course, bikers. Everyone here is looking for a down-to-earth way of life, and they all come together twice a week at the local farmers' markets, where the emphasis is on organic food."

There's a hitch, she says. It will cost you. "As with most of California, Davis real estate is pricey."

A remodeler takes over

People news: Home remodeler William Carter, owner of Sacramento's William Carter Co., has been named president-elect of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

That will make him 2009 president of the Illinois-based group, which has 7,700 member companies and is the voice of the U.S. home remodeling industry.

A fellow Sacramento remodeler, Nick Kress, local territory representative for Standards of Excellence, is the new vice-chairman of NARI's national awards committee. Carter and Kress are former presidents of NARI's Sacramento chapter.

Who's on first

It looks like one of the slowest starts for home building in years in the Sacramento region. But there's always a Top 10 list. Here, from the Folsom-based Gregory Group, are the region's leading home builders and their sales counts for the first quarter of 2008:

- 1) Centex Homes, Dallas, 228.
- 2) Beazer Homes, Atlanta, 131.
- 3) D.R. Horton Inc., Fort Worth, Texas, 113.
- 4) Lennar Communities, Miami, 87.
- 5) Morrison Homes, Bradenton, Fla., 74.
- 6) Meritage Homes, Scottsdale, Ariz., 67.
- 7) KB Home, Los Angeles, 59.
- 8) Del Webb, division of Pulte Homes, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 58.
- 9) JMC Homes, Roseville, 45.
- 10) K. Hovnanian Enterprises, Red Bank, N.J., 45.

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