

# Home-Grown High Performance

*For a green and growing Capital Region*

BY JOHN IMES

Wherever you go, green is a hot topic and what follows inevitably are calls for new laws and regulations mandating green, or in the case of some national trade organizations — one-size-fits-all green built standards.

With more and more people wanting to pursue green, healthy and energy-efficient options at home, making an informed choice about where to turn for your next building or remodeling project can be a challenge.

Fortunately, our state and the Capital Region are blessed with credible, home-grown, well-established and nationally recognized green building and residential energy-efficiency programs.

In this edition of Making Green Sense, we look at some of the major trends and local players that are shaping the fast-growing green building marketplace.

The most recent *Green Homeowner SmartMarket Report* offers a good snapshot of where the green building marketplace is headed:

- The market for green homes is expected to rise from \$2 billion to up to \$20 billion over the next five years. These homes contain at least three of five environmental building categories: energy efficiency, indoor air quality, water efficiency, resource efficiency and site management.
- Standard existing homes are becoming increasingly green, with homeowners using green products for 40 percent of their remodeling work.



- Most Americans find out about green homes through word-of-mouth, followed by television and the Internet.
- Green homeowners are happy with their homes and are recommending them at significantly higher rates.
- Homeowners are buying green homes because they are concerned about the health of their families, as well as to reduce energy and other home operating costs.
- Education and awareness of green ranks as the most important obstacle, slightly higher even than the additional first costs associated with building green.

Wisconsin has long been a leader in efforts to educate and promote the building and remodeling of homes that incorporate sustainable building practices, energy and resource efficiency standards and improved indoor air quality.

Since the late 1990s, Wisconsin ENERGY STAR® Homes, Home

Performance with ENERGY STAR and the Green Built Home program have built their reputations by combining high environmental standards with cost-effective strategies to encourage home builders, remodelers and consumers to improve construction practices.

When a homeowner or builder combines these programs in a home or remodeling project, they become “perfect partners,” covering the green spectrum, including landscape conservation and stormwater management, energy efficiency, indoor air quality, water conservation, waste reduction, recycling and disposal, material selection and related topics.

Moreover, the programs offer many valuable tools, including comprehensive and user-friendly checklists, online resources, financial incentives, consulting, plan review, construction site visits and unbiased, third-party verification to create safe, comfortable, durable, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly homes. In fact, more than 10,000 high-performance homes with lower environmental impacts have been certified in Wisconsin since 1999.

Many Capital Region home builders, association and utility representatives, environmental professionals, architects, Realtors, green product and service providers, financial institutions and nonprofit groups already embrace and actively support these programs in numerous ways, including:

- Participating on local green built and green real estate committees



- Providing searchable categories on the local Multiple Listing Service (MLS) for Wisconsin ENERGY STAR and Green Built Homes
- Offering green building educational and training seminars
- Sponsoring community green building events such as the Green Built Home Makeover
- Implementing innovative erosion control, lighting, waste reduction and recycling initiatives that are more flexible and can better adapt to regional and local opportunities, architectural styles and climatic differences than one-size-fits-all green standards.

When business leaders and citizens step up and say “we can” take responsibility for better environmental outcomes, let’s not tell them “you can’t” by imposing inflexible standards or burdensome regulatory command and control.

Thomas “Tip” O’Neill, a longtime Speaker of the House in the U.S. Congress, once declared, “All politics is local.” We can ensure that “All green building is local” by supporting home-grown high-performance green building initiatives that serve a green and growing Capital Region.

### Green-it-yourself resources

- Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes and Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, [www.weccusa.org](http://www.weccusa.org)
- Green Built Home New Home and Remodeling Checklist and information available at [www.greenbuilthome.org](http://www.greenbuilthome.org)
- Information on Madison Green Agents is available at the Alvarado Real Estate Group, [www.thealvaradogroup.com](http://www.thealvaradogroup.com)
- Healthy Homes, [www.healthyhomereports.com](http://www.healthyhomereports.com)



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