



Green-minded real estate professionals are Capturing an Emerging Market

By Zaher Karp

In early 2008, the South Central Wisconsin Multiple Listing Service became the fourth MLS nationwide to release a feature that allows homes to be sorted by their “green” certifications and characteristics, including Energy Star and Green Built Home designations.

“[Madison’s Green Agents] got the local MLS to improve and implement checkboxes having to do with environmentally friendly features, like Green Built and Energy Star,” says **Stuart Utley**, Wisconsin’s first EcoBroker, of **First Weber**. “Compliance hasn’t been the best; people have been claiming to be certified but have not been as dedicated providing online certification documents. I recently did a search on everything that is active in the last year since the designation has been available and came up with 352 homes

that had at least one of the Green Built Homes or Energy Star Certified home categories checked.”

A Realtor who is certified as an EcoBroker or has the Realtor-Green designation can guide homeowners or buyers through the process that will add value to energy-efficient homes, either through money saved on utilities or added value to a potential buyer. These agents are aware of an emerging market and are dedicated in their green pursuits.

“It really is a personal crusade for us for the most part,” says **Sara Alvarado, Alvarado Group**, who was recently awarded the Green Built Home Supporter award for 2008 by the Madison Area Builders’ Association and is part of Madison’s Green Agents. “It is a niche market, but rarely do people say we’re looking for a green house or we’re

green and we want to work with you. It’s really important to create an awareness of what a homeowner can do.”

Alvarado says there are the three main reasons people consider a home with green accreditations:

- To be environmentally responsible; to make a difference, for example, in climate change.
- Personal health and indoor air quality.
- Energy efficiency and lower utility costs.

Alvarado adds that a serious buyer usually wants to know how much the average heating and electricity bills are and if the agent doesn’t provide that information, they go to MG&E to research it. When a home is being marketed as green and has energy-efficient features, there is a key difference in utility bills.

“In this day and age, this is a key factor for buyers, green or not. So a smart seller and Realtor will promote those features of the home that make it energy-efficient,” such as new windows, passive solar building orientation, two-zone furnace, natural light, 98-percent efficient furnace with an air cleaner or recently cleaned ducts. “Those are some examples that absolutely help sell a home and make it a better system that decreases the impact it has on the environment.”

“The two most important words on “green” housing: land use,” says **Troy Thiel** of **First Weber**. “Most green communities are our densest communities and Madison is nowhere near those numbers, nor should it be. But if we want greener things, we need to understand that we can create incentives through land use. If someone has a green housing subdivision 40 miles from the nearest employment, whether the building itself is actually green or not, how green can the transportation costs be?”

As such, it’s important to consider what resources, offices, shopping centers, recreational areas are near a home if you are selling or buying. The green home market, building its base on cost-efficiency and environmental impact, is a vital emerging part of our current economy. ■



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