



Affordable Green Housing Momentum in Florida: Recap of Symposium



*Kathy Cabanaugh Malone, FYN, Builder & Developer
State Coordinator*



By Lydia Beltrán

Florida Progress Energy sponsored an affordable green housing symposium facilitated by the Florida Housing Coalition on April 30, 2009 in Orlando. The emphasis of the symposium was to offer affordable green housing information and to provide a forum to discuss policy ideas and visions for Florida's future agenda. As evidenced by various presentations made throughout the symposium, Florida has been cultivating its affordable green housing landscape over the years, beginning with a major milestone – The Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC). Established in 2000, FGBC has its own Home Designation Standard, which provides the only standards for Florida's unique environment and is recognized by state and local leaders, a Certification Program and network of trained certifying agents. FGBC's Home Standard categories include energy, water, lot choice, site, health, materials, disaster mitigation, and general.

Green Rebate Programs

Major utility companies join the list of notable contributors to Florida's affordable green housing momentum, Progress Energy Florida and Florida Power and Light to name a few. At the symposium, Bill Simpson, with Progress Energy Florida, and Dan Haywood, with Florida Power and Light, provided their perspectives regarding their entities' goals to motivate customers to implement measures using its rebates and to increase knowledge of savings potential. Both Simpson and Haywood reminded participants to take advantage of their services to conduct inspections for improvements in quality control. In combining these overall goals, Progress Energy Florida has worked in partnerships with various affordable housing based entities, including partnership with the City of St. Petersburg's Energy Conservation Program through its Housing and Community Development Department. The goal of the program is to: (1) reduce energy consumption and the carbon footprint of the City of St. Petersburg; (2) make home ownership sustainable by decreasing the operating cost of housing; (3) provide financial



Dan Haywood, Florida Power and Light, Program Manager

assistance to citizens of the City for home energy efficiency improvements; and (4) use Progress Energy rebates to provide cost-savings to homeowners. Progress Energy provides incentives for items, including duct test and repair, ceiling and wall insulation upgrades, heat pump replacement, reflective roof replacement windows/window film, water-saving fixtures (City of St. Pete/SWFWMD) with an overall approximate savings of \$980 per household.

Additional programs such as the Florida Yards and Neighbors (FYN), which is coordinated through a statewide office and implemented through University of Florida's County Cooperative Extension Service and other local, regional, state, and federal agencies, assures that its goals are met through nine principles. Kathy Cavanaugh Malone, with the FYN, reported that the principles include: (1) manage yard pests, (2) reduce storm (3) water runoff, (4) provide for wildlife, (5) protect the waterfront, (6) right plant, right place, (7) water efficiently, (8) mulch, and (9) recycle and fertilize appropriately. These principles all contribute to FYN's goals to incorporate quality landscapes that conserve water; protect the environment, are drought tolerant and that are adaptable to local conditions.

Additional resources adding to the momentum include those provided through the U.S. Department of HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program and Green Retrofitting, along with other incentives such as the

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) funding from the Economic Stimulus Act, Federal tax credits for Energy Efficiency Tax (available at 30% of the cost, up to \$1500 in 2009 and 2010 for existing homes only), and Natural Gas Energy Conservation rebates (replacing old appliances with new energy-efficient natural gas appliances).

State, Local, and Regional Approaches

Symposium presenter Mike Rogers, with Capital Green Building, told participants that the most progressive form of addressing sustainability is through leadership from both the public and the government. Rogers, who also serves as the chairperson of the FGBC Affordable Housing Committee, stressed that the Growth Management Act of Florida needs to be "rules driven," with a bureaucratic strategy and to include measures for local flexibility and creativity along with local and regional approaches.

"Florida is lacking in an urban policy framework," Rogers said. "And although Florida is geared to growing its population, it has to take care of the consequences of all the growth. Sustainability is about managing growth better than in the past and dealing with urban problems and managing and handling all the current growth including redevelopment."

He also explained that much of the existing federal money and funds under the new green funding will



Bill Lazar, Executive Director, St. Johns Housing Partnership

be concentrated in the Green Zones and increase opportunities in sustainable developments that will help communities.

Green Energy Policies

St. John's Housing Partnership's Executive Director Bill Lazar provided an insight into the world of the affordable green housing developer, by highlighting the nuts and bolts of obtaining various designation standards for its award winning Hancock Place project. He stressed the need to assemble a team with an appropriate experience level and knowledge in construction, energy conservation and ability to access green resources. Lazar explained the importance of taking advantage of training opportunities provided through Florida Solar Energy Center and the FGBC Certification Program.

Dr. Pierce Jones, with Program for Resource Efficient Communities, also provided insight as to energy costs, by comparing several projects. He mentioned certain energy practices, including utilities that have begun installing smart meters.

“You need more than just the meters to help customers save power,” Dr. Jones said. “There needs to be some kind of informational device, like a Web site, that will tell customers how much power they're using.” Dr. Jones stated that homeowner education can generate big returns and that “measured performance is the only thing that counts.”

The symposium ended with discussion related to the need to incorporate green value into major aspects of housing such as the appraisal and mortgage industries, establish collaboratives including, for example, Association of Counties and League of Cities, streamlining green education and encourage State Licensing Board to include a number of hours for renewals and incorporate green building specialization as an incentive to become more specialized and/or incentivize the higher skill construction trades.

The Florida Housing Coalition is grateful for the involvement of Florida Progress Energy and our presenters for making this symposium possible. For additional information, contact the presenters directly:

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