

Building A Greener World



(NAPSA)—Green building is the gripping topic for today's eco-minded builders and homebuyers. While new homebuyers are increasingly sensitive to green building, a new survey reveals there are wide gaps in knowledge of which building materials are actually best for the environment.

According to the National Green Building Gauge, a survey of 1,000 prospective homebuyers to measure their understanding on a range of green building decisions, nearly four out of five believe minimizing environmental impact is an important factor in selecting home construction materials. But when it comes to rating common building materials, only 50 percent of homebuyers believe that North America's most enduring building material—wood—is a good environmental choice for building even though science overwhelmingly supports this as true.

Wood Really Does Grow on Sustainable Trees

Perhaps the biggest gap in knowledge revealed in the survey surrounds the state of North America's forests. While more than 60 percent of prospective homebuyers believe that wood is an excellent renewable and recyclable resource, less than one-third believe that forests in North America are abundant, even though the best available data proves otherwise. Two successive "State of the World's Forests" reports, released by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), show that North American forests have increased in size and are about 20 percent larger than they were in 1970.

"Steady regeneration efforts have helped to sustain the growth of our forests while ensuring that millions of environmentally and structurally sound homes are built—and will continue to be built for generations to come," says Kelly McCloskey, President and CEO of the Wood Promotion Network. "Not only are our forests abundant, but wood is the only major building material to embark on environmental certification programs. Today, North America has the largest area of independently certified forests in

the world—well over 200 million acres. Despite this progress and the solid body of evidence behind it, many people still do not know that North American forests are increasing and continue to produce a continuous sustainable supply of wood."

Wood—Green by Design

The survey also reveals that many prospective homeowners are unaware of the environmental impacts of the very building material choices they face. Nearly 40 percent of perspective homebuyers believe the manufacturing of concrete and steel is less intrusive on the environment than the harvesting of trees for wood, despite strong evidence to the contrary.

"In our culture's constant search for new and better things, it's counter-intuitive that the material we've relied on for years is still the best, especially for the environment," says McCloskey. "All human activity has an impact on the environment, but when making material choices, science shows us the way. Wood is the natural choice. For more than 200 years, North America has used wood to build the vast majority of its homes and today, a growing body of research proves that building with wood is something we can truly feel good about."

That research includes some of today's most advanced technology, like satellite mapping to track North America's growing forests and a software modeling system that lets builders, architects and engineers measure the environmental impacts of the building materials they consider for each project. Developed by the ATHENA Sustainable Materials Institute in 1997—a non-profit organization supported by all the major building material manufacturers—nearly every application of the ATHENA model run since its inception can be distilled into one simple rule: where practical, the more wood you use in a home, the better the home is for the environment.

For more information about the ATHENA model, green building tips for new home construction and information on North American forests, visit www.beconstructive.com.