

Green Remodeling: Here to Stay

By Karin Tucker, Executive Officer
Charlotte-DeSoto Building Industry Association

Two years ago, the C-D BIA Remodelers hosted a lunch meeting featuring a program about "Building Green," presented by a Sarasota architect with green building design expertise. His presentation outlined the very basic concepts of green building, along with a passionate invitation to the remodelers and builders to jump on the green train. Of course, that green train is charging full speed ahead through all facets of society and our culture these days, with more individuals and businesses than ever clamoring to jump on board. Hard to believe it was only a couple years ago when green enthusiasts still had to work so hard to get the message out that green is good.

Of course green is good. And, homeowners who make green choices when building and remodeling benefit the environment along with their household budgets. As National Remodeling Month comes to a close, the C-D BIA Remodelers are bringing "green remodeling" into the spotlight.

C-D BIA Remodeler Bill Truex, Truex Preferred Construction, attended the National Green Building Conference earlier this month in New Orleans. He says "green" is here to stay.

"The trend is here for the long haul," Truex explained. "Many [building products] manufacturers have been on this track for some time, and the trend has begun at the manufacturing level. There's a lot of science behind green practices." Truex pointed to scientific advances in lighting, for instance, and new LED "can" lights that make the popular low-energy fluorescent bulbs seem like yesterday's news. The new LED lights can offer the same output as a standard 65 watt incandescent bulb using the energy of a 12 watt bulb – while giving off zero heat. Pricing on such lights make them more practical for commercial renovations and higher-end remodeling for now. But it shouldn't take long for prices to drop and make this super-efficient lighting the go-to choice for standard residential remodels as well.

There are innovative new floor covering options available, too. Again, ingenious manufacturers and scientists have partnered to create greener options. Carole Ponzio of Design Solutions described carpet being made with corn sugar instead of petroleum.

"Isn't that inventive? It replaces higher priced petroleum with a renewal commodity and eliminates the off-gassing of damaging odors and vapors," Ponzio noted. Off-gassing is the release of VOC's or volatile organic compounds –

chemicals that are released from paints, carpets, cleaning products, furniture and more.

Another high-tech green solution addresses VOC's along with other household air pollutants like dust mites, pollen, pet dander, cigarette smoke and mold. HEPA filtration systems can be retrofitted to existing air conditioning systems to clean the air and make the remodeled home healthier, too.

Paul Schaefer, Schaefer Homes, likes a low-tech product offered by one cabinet manufacturer. "They offer a series of cabinets made from old, 'worn out' rubber trees – trees that would otherwise have been burned."

In fact, one of the simplest green concepts remodelers mentioned over and over was another low tech option: reuse.

"Recycling and repurposing older items in a new way is a great green choice," Ponzio suggested. And doing so when remodeling is one way to keep your home's character even as you update it with greener features.

Pat Laurendine, Gold Coast Remodeling, has reused hardwood flooring, floor boards, trim and cabinetry in various projects. "It's practical, economical and it reduces waste," he said.

C-D BIA Remodeler Larry Powell, Lambert and O'Neill, is a registered certifying agent for the Florida Green Building Coalition, one of several groups championing green building and remodeling.

"Obviously, energy consumption has become a huge concern to everyone, especially in the last year," Powell said, "and 'green' is here for the long run."

Since remodeling green can mean more green in your wallet with reduced utility bills, lower maintenance and a healthier home environment, you can bet he's right.

For more information about green remodeling or green remodeling products, call the Charlotte-DeSoto Building Industry Association at (941) 625-0804.