

## Cultivate Greener Homes

**Boost construction of housing that is environmentally friendly,  
reasonably priced**

**September 22, 2007**

By LOU OCHOA

California is rapidly leaving behind its "Golden State" image and quickly going green. While "green" usually describes money, envy or even a political party, the word is now associated with the environment and the heightened awareness that is transforming the way we live our lives.



Albert Corona / The Press-Enterprise

It is no surprise that California is at the forefront of this new shift, and perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the home building industry in Riverside County. For decades, California's home builders have pushed for increased energy efficiency requirements and built generations worth of new homes that are dramatically more environmentally friendly than their predecessors.

However, the "greening" hasn't stopped there. Three

years ago, home builders, working with engineers, scientists and conservation specialists, created the California Green Builder program -- now the most successful green building program in the state. To date, more than 6,781 new certified homes are scheduled to be built, with 1,431 already completed. These homes alone eliminate more than 270,000 pounds of greenhouse gases and save

nearly 30 million gallons of water annually.

The California Green Builder program is officially recognized as an environmentally friendly green building design program by the California Public Utilities Commission, the California Energy Commission and the California League of Cities.

The program's rigorous standards require participating new homes to exceed California's already strict energy-efficiency standards by 15 percent and to divert at least 50 percent of construction waste through recycling. The standards require significant water conservation and require that wood products to be harvested from sustainable forests.

The countywide adoption of the California Green Builder program bolsters

current water conservation efforts and helps ensure dramatic water savings in new communities. Within California Green Builder program guidelines, each new home must include innovative plumbing systems and new designs for landscaping and irrigation, or participate in the California Friendly conservation program. Each home must save a minimum of 20,000 gallons of water per home per year.

In addition to producing quantifiable results, the California Green Builder program was designed to ensure that implementation by cities and home builders is seamless -- a key to keeping home prices low and program participation high. According to the Western Riverside Council of Governments, more than 400,000 new homes are needed to meet the population growth during the next 15 years. The Building Industry Association believes this is an excellent opportunity for the home building industry and local government to work together to promote green building practices without sacrificing the dream of homeownership by driving up new-home costs.

Together, we're already achieving success. With support from Mayor Ron Loveridge, Riverside recently became the first city in the state to create an incentive-based California Green Builder program.

In June, the City Council adopted the program and provided participating home builders with guaranteed processing timelines, overtime inspections and priority electrical design. These incentives will expedite the process of building a green home, saving time and keeping homes competitively priced.

Success of the California Green Builder program is rooted in participation. Riverside's action was the first step in the greening of Riverside County, but it's important to adopt common, incentive-based standards in other cities throughout the county that will allow home builders to offer environmentally friendly homes with good amenities at the most reasonable cost.

A uniform program makes the application of green standards faster and broader because it keeps the cost of construction and design lower than it would be with multiple standards.

As a next step, the Building Industry Association is now working with the Western Riverside Council of Governments and many local governments to adopt California Green Builder programs.

As the growth of Riverside County continues, the adoption of the California Green Builder program by local governments will help ensure that the progress we've made together to protect the environment will continue. Through the California Green Builder program, Riverside County home builders are leading the way in the greening of our Golden State.