

Green Neighborhoods

By ANNA CHANG-YEN | Green Shoot Media

Organic cooperative farms and charter schools that emphasize conservation. Homes made with locally sourced materials and yards featuring xeriscaping. Vast expanses of open space and community composting programs.

There's a sustainable neighborhood for every passion.

If purchasing a home with a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification appeals to you, a sustainable neighborhood also might be a good fit.

The idea of carrying out our daily living while treading much more lightly on the planet is not just a noble idea. In the real estate field, it combines with a trend called new urbanism to offer more value to eco-conscious home buyers. According to www.NewUrbanism.org, new urbanism is "creating and restoring walkable, diverse, compact towns and cities that enable a higher quality of life by offering new choices for living." Put more succinctly by the U.S. Green Building Council: "Is your local grocery store within walking distance?"

If you're home shopping with your environmental footprint in mind, consider looking for certifications such as the USGBC's LEED for Neighborhood Development.

Developers are offering more value to home buyers by building homes that help them tread lightly on the environment. Sustainable neighborhoods let communities do more with less.



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This standard takes into consideration a neighborhood's big picture, from building materials and energy consumption to green space to bike paths, to denote neighborhoods doing the best job of achieving sustainability.

GREEN DEVELOPMENTS

As of 2015, nearly 93,000 homes had earned LEED's certified, silver, gold and platinum seals. Each level measures a building's ability to use as little water and energy as possible, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Between homes and businesses, the USGBC certifies 1.85 million square feet daily.

"Green construction is

quickly outpacing conventional construction in the U.S.," said Rick Fedrizzi, CEO and founding chair of USGBC. "LEED construction drives economic growth, creates jobs and makes communities greener."

By early 2016, USGBC reported that LEED-certified homes and businesses covered more than 5 billion square feet globally. Such development projects include The Treehouse at Memorial City, a Houston space that is part eco-office and part clubhouse; Holy Cross Hospital in Germantown, Md.; and the University of Washington's Husky Stadium in Seattle.

So why not bring these green

principles home? In June 2015, the National Association of Realtors reminded its pros in a profile of the market that 10 percent of home buyers ages 34 and younger said they bought their home for green or efficiency reasons, in addition to 9 percent of buyers ages 35-49 and 60-68. As many as 68 percent of buyers said energy-efficient appliances were important to them, and 47 percent said they look for environmentally friendly community features.

AFFORDABILITY

Even more recent than green building is the focus on affordable homes that also are sustainable. Though renewable

REAL ESTATE 101

Top Green Cities and Neighborhoods

Portland, Ore., led Moyers and Company's 2013 list of the "12 Cities Leading the Way in Sustainability." Read the list at <http://bit.ly/1o0tuxx>.

To read the U.S. Green Building Council's 2016 Top 10 States for LEED, led by Illinois, visit <http://bit.ly/1Sh642A>.

sources of building materials were once cost prohibitive, the tide is turning. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is leading the way by emphasizing sustainability in its affordable housing programs. And USGBC's Affordable Green Neighborhoods Grant Program provides developers seeking a LEED certification with grant money and educational resources to help bring sustainability to the masses.

Today more than ever, buyers and activists have the tools to do their part and help others do the same, begging the question of whether, in time, the saying may be, "Home is where the wind turbine is."



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HOMESWISE GLOSSARY

Sustainable communities: Urban, suburban, and rural places that successfully integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: 1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; 2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; 3) energy use and climate change; and 4) public health and environmental impact.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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