

Home Update

Current real estate and market trends from Windermere

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Living Green Goes Mainstream

Climate change. Carbon footprint. Biofuel. They're terms that didn't even exist several years ago. Now sustainable, or "green" living is on everyone's mind. According to the National Association of Home Builders, even as the housing market has moderated in many parts of the country, the demand for green homebuilding and remodeling is exceeding the available supply—and that's despite the fact that green homebuilding has risen 50 percent since 2004.

So, why the sharp rise in popularity? Many are realizing that a lifestyle that uses less energy, fewer natural resources and fewer toxic chemicals is not only healthier for the planet, it's also healthier for our families.

The benefits of a green home

A healthier home

We spend most of our time indoors, so the quality of the air in our homes is important. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the air inside the average home is two to five times more polluted than the air outside. One of the culprits is the advances in new construction. The "tighter" sealing is great for energy savings, but it also reduces the amount of fresh air entering our homes. That allows chemical

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Environmentally friendly homes are not just better for the planet, they're healthier to live in, they cut your energy bills and they really pay off when you're ready to sell. Here are some ideas you can use to make your home a bit greener.



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fumes from paints, adhesives, carpeting and household cleaning products to build up.

Using natural and low-toxic materials creates healthier indoor air, and can help reduce the symptoms of allergies, asthma and other respiratory ailments. A good way to start is to use cleaning products made from natural and non-toxic ingredients. If you're remodeling, choose low-VOC paints and stains to reduce toxic fumes. Furniture made from whole wood is a better choice than that constructed from plywood or particleboard, both of which give off fumes from chemicals such as formaldehyde that are used in manufacturing. The same goes for carpeting. Natural carpet, such as sisal, cotton or wool, is preferable to synthetic carpet; synthetic carpet "off-gases" the chemicals used in manufacturing. That's where that new-carpet smell comes from.

Cost savings

Living green is healthier for your pocketbook, too. The savings from an energy-efficient home add up fast, mostly

in lower utility bills. How much lower? A builder in California sells homes equipped with solar panels, additional insulation and other energy-saving features that boast utility bills 60 percent less than conventional homes. While the homes cost more, the higher monthly mortgage payment is more than offset by the energy savings.

If you're not ready to install solar panels, consider giving your ducts a checkup. The typical house loses 15 percent to 20 percent of its heat or air-conditioning leakage from ducts alone. Make sure they're well sealed and insulated, and watch your energy bill go down.

More good news: The government wants to reward energy savings as well, so there are a number of local and federal tax-credit programs that offer incentives to homeowners who install energy-saving features, such as insulation or energy-efficient windows.

Greater resale value

Having an environmentally friendly home also pays off when it comes time to

sell. According to a survey by the Shelton Group, 78 percent of consumers say they would choose one home over another based on its energy efficiency, and the majority would pay more for energy-saving features.

Another study by a Colorado builder showed that similar-sized green homes sold at a \$20,000 premium over non-green homes—great news for sellers. The good news for buyers: After the utility bills were included, the green homes cost less per month.

One more sign that green is hot is the increasing number of buyers who are taking advantage of an Energy Efficient Mortgage (EEM). These "green" mortgages benefit the borrower in several ways. First, the estimated energy savings are added to the buyer's income, allowing them to qualify for a larger mortgage amount. Second, the EEM allows borrowers to roll the costs of energy improvements into the total mortgage amount, allowing the upgrades to be paid for over the life of the mortgage.

Green your home today

Here are some low-cost, high-yield things you can do right now to leave a lighter footprint on the environment.

1 Switch to compact fluorescent lightbulbs.

The CFLs of yester-year used to be big, hard to find and spendy. Now you can get them at nearly any store that stocks lightbulbs. They're a bit more expensive than traditional incandescent bulbs, but they last 10 times as long and use much less power. Need a little extra nudge to make the switch? How's this: According to the Environmental Protection Agency, if every American swapped out just one incandescent bulb for a CFL, we'd save enough energy to light 2.5 million homes for a whole year.

2 Unplug electronics and appliances.

TVs, computers, audio systems and other electronics often have a "standby" mode that can use up to half the power they draw when turned on. Plug your entertainment equipment and other devices into a power strip. Just switch off the strip and you eliminate any standby draw, and also protect your equipment from possible

power surges. Contrary to popular belief, turning a computer on and off is not harmful, and it has a huge energy-saving impact. According to an NPR report, U.S. companies alone waste more than \$1 billion a year on electricity for computers that are left on when not in use.

3 Adjust your thermostat.

Here's where a small change on your part makes a big impact on the environment. As much as half of the energy used in your home goes to heating and cooling. By setting your thermostat just two degrees lower in the winter and two degrees higher in the summer, you'll save about \$100 a year in energy costs—and about one ton of greenhouse gases that won't make their way into the environment.

4 Install water-saving products.

Switch to low-flow faucets, showerheads and toilets, and you can reduce water use by 40 percent.

5 Clean your air-conditioning filter.

Air conditioners with dirty filters have to work harder, which means using more energy. Depending on where you live, your air conditioner may need cleaning as much as once a week. The good news: A clean filter keeps out allergens and other irritants, and a clean-running unit can save you \$150 a year on your energy bill.

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Home Pricing Guide: Following are average 3-bedroom home sale prices for some of the neighborhoods served by Windermere. Figures are based on multiple listing data for homes sold October 1, 2006, to March 31, 2007. For information on other market areas, please call me.

Arizona

Phoenix	\$268,000
Prescott	\$399,000
Scottsdale	\$597,000
Tucson	\$285,000

California

Carmel	\$1,863,000
Los Angeles	\$950,000
Palm Springs	\$510,000

Hawaii

Kona	\$725,000
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Idaho

Boise	\$226,000
Bonnars Ferry	\$218,000
Caldwell—Nampa	\$159,000
Coeur d'Alene	\$226,000
Driggs	\$280,000
Eagle	\$259,000
Lewiston	\$162,000
McCall	\$407,000
Moscow	\$186,000
Post Falls	\$208,000
Priest River	\$213,000
Sagle	\$404,000
Sandpoint	\$302,000
Schweitzer	\$438,000
Sun Valley—Hailey	\$398,000
Ketchum	\$1,338,000

Montana

Deer Lodge	\$100,000
Helena	\$225,000
Kalispell	\$242,000
Lakeside	\$365,000
Missoula	\$237,000
Polson	\$348,000
Ronan	\$218,000
Whitefish	\$410,000

Nevada

Las Vegas	\$309,000
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Oregon

Albany	\$200,000
Ashland	\$363,000
Astoria	\$270,000
Beaverton	\$246,000
Bend	\$376,000
Canby	\$322,000
Cannon Beach	\$606,000
Clackamas	\$319,000
Clatskanie	\$232,000
Corvallis	\$282,000
Creswell	\$231,000
Dallas	\$222,000
Eugene	\$269,000
Florence	\$268,000
Gearhart	\$340,000
Grants Pass	\$258,000
Gresham	\$281,000
Hillsboro	\$300,000
Hood River	\$342,000
Jacksonville	\$389,000
Klamath Falls	\$125,000
Lake Oswego	\$568,000
Lincoln City	\$321,000
Manzanita	\$531,000
McMinnville	\$246,000
Medford	\$284,000
Molalla	\$263,000
Monmouth	\$212,000

Oregon, continued

Newport	\$492,000
Portland	
North	\$270,000
Northeast	\$351,000
Southeast	\$264,000
West	\$537,000
Redmond	\$296,000
Roseburg	\$236,000
Salem	\$211,000
Salishan/Gleneden Beach	
	\$721,000
Sandy	\$281,000
Scappoose	\$221,000
Shady Cove/Eagle Point	
	\$300,000
Springfield	\$211,000
St. Helens	\$204,000
The Dalles	\$183,000
West Linn	\$408,000
Wilsonville	\$425,000
Utah	
Park City	\$1,111,000
Provo	\$238,000
Salt Lake City	\$244,000

Washington

Aberdeen	\$138,000
Allyn	\$322,000
Anacortes	\$479,000
Arlington	\$334,000
Auburn	\$335,000
Bainbridge Island	\$710,000
Belfair	\$241,000
Bellevue	\$635,000
Bellingham	\$331,000
Bingen/Wt. Salmon	\$370,000
Blaine/Birch Bay	\$303,000
Bonney Lake	\$299,000
Bothell	\$427,000
Bremerton	\$268,000
Burien	\$345,000
Camano Island	\$414,000
Camas	\$358,000
Cathlamet	\$194,000
Centralia	\$186,000
Chelan	\$350,000
Chewelah	\$114,000
Clarkston	\$145,000
Cle Elum	\$400,000
Colville	\$176,000
Darrington	\$213,000
Dayton	\$126,000
Deer Park	\$204,000
Edmonds	\$430,000
Ellensburg	\$245,000
Enumclaw	\$350,000
Ephrata	\$125,000
Everett	\$326,000
Federal Way	\$308,000
Friday Harbor	\$779,000
Gig Harbor	\$423,000
Goldendale	\$125,000
Issaquah	\$554,000
Kent	\$340,000
Kettle Falls	\$141,000
Key Peninsula	\$301,000
Kirkland	\$553,000
Lake Forest Park	\$455,000
Lake Stevens	\$360,000
Lake Tapps	\$463,000

Washington, continued

Lakewood	\$281,000
Leavenworth	\$446,000
Long Beach	\$233,000
Longview	\$197,000
Lopez Island	\$627,000
Lynden	\$309,000
Lynnwood	\$386,000
Maple Valley	\$364,000
Marysville	\$299,000
Mazama	\$290,000
Mercer Island	\$987,000
Mill Creek	\$461,000
Monroe	\$355,000
Moses Lake	\$168,000
Mount Vernon	\$280,000
Mukilteo	\$580,000
Ocean Shores	\$221,000
Olympia	\$296,000
Omak/Okanogan	\$190,000
Orcas Island	\$744,000
Oroville	\$145,000
Pacific Beach	\$292,000
Packwood	\$177,000
Port Angeles	\$302,000
Port Hadlock	\$246,000
Port Ludlow	\$472,000
Port Orford	\$293,000
Port Townsend	\$364,000
Poulsbo	\$386,000
Pullman	\$247,000
Puyallup	\$284,000
Quilcene	\$145,000
Quincy	\$189,000
Redmond	\$554,000
Renton	\$386,000
Republic	\$158,000
Sammamish	\$556,000
Seattle	
Mid-City	\$495,000
Northeast	\$499,000
Northwest	\$654,000
Southeast	\$414,000
West	\$425,000
Sequim	\$405,000
Shelton	\$224,000
Shoreline	\$410,000
Silverdale	\$306,000
Snohomish	\$433,000
Spokane	\$224,000
Stanwood	\$341,000
Stevenson	\$444,000
Sumner	\$315,000
Tacoma	\$262,000
Tri-Cities	\$172,000
Twisp	\$241,000
Vancouver	\$260,000
Vashon Island	\$626,000
Walla Walla	\$191,000
Wenatchee	\$246,000
Westport	\$195,000
Whidbey Island	\$435,000
Woodinville	\$529,000
Woodland	\$340,000
Yakima	\$176,000
Yelm	\$235,000

Wyoming

Jackson Hole	\$1,300,000
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Name
Address
City, State, Zip



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6 Re-think your laundry.

There are two ways to reduce the amount of energy used for washing clothes—use less water and use cooler water. About 90 percent of the energy used for washing clothes is for heating the water. Unless you're dealing with oily stains, use warm or cold water. Switching your temperature setting from hot to warm can cut energy use in half. You'll also save resources by washing and drying only full loads.

7 Use healthier home-improvement products.

Many paints, stains and adhesives contain toxic chemicals called volatile organic compounds (VOCs). When you use the products, they release

toxins into the air that affect the quality of the air in your home, sometimes causing headaches and nausea. For the healthiest choice, look for products that are low-to non-toxic or labeled "low VOC."

8 Insulate your water heater.

A water heater uses most of its energy keeping the temperature of the water in the tank warm. Most of this heat is lost through the walls of the tank. Wrap your water heater with insulation that has an "R" value between 7 and 11, and you reduce the heat lost by 40 percent or more.

