

WNC Green Building Council

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Nonprofit organizations nourish the people within our communities, caring for those in need, protecting our historic heritage, educating young and old, and nurturing our cultural soul. Every month, The Laurel brings you the stories behind these agencies.

From sticks and bricks to rocks and hides, humans have met their needs for shelter in a thousand creative ways throughout history. Dwellings, originally serving to protect us from rain, wind and sun, have evolved into often elaborate designs that not only express our lives, but also our personalities.

This evolution of building, however, has a shadow side: waste. Homes are currently responsible for 65% of solid waste, 72% of electricity consumption, 39% of carbon emissions, and 12% of all water use in the U.S.

Putting form and function on the same page as sustainability is “green building,” an industry growing nationwide. Asheville is on the leading edge.

“Builders, developers, and homebuyers turn to Asheville in large part because of the Western North Carolina Green Building Council,” says Mary Love, board chair and Green Realtor at Keller Williams.

Through community education and innovative programs, the Council promotes environmentally sustainable and health-conscious building practices. Being local, they are able to dictate what is green for our unique eco-region, while also offering accessible hands-on assistance during the building process.

The idea began in 2000 with five building professionals who were concerned about the health and environmental impacts of design and construction. The WNC Green Building Council was established the following year, and today has more than 200 members. Over the years, the Council has educated more than 6,000 building industry professionals and homeowners, worked with local governments and utilities to provide training and incentives for green building, and certified 871 homes with 83 more currently in process.

The Council’s certification program, Green Built North Carolina (formerly NC Healthy Built Homes), is the Council’s flagship program. “It’s a bit like the Energy

Star program for appliances, except your home is the appliance,” explains Jody Guokas, of JAG And Associates Construction, Inc.

To be certified as a Green Home, a third-party rater inspects during several points of construction, evaluating site selection, water efficiency, heating and cooling efficiency, indoor air quality, building envelope, and more. The more green construction elements a home contains, the higher the rating—from Standard to Platinum.

The Council provides a 20-page checklist of possible green construction elements, including advanced framing, proper duct work, and the use of low VOC adhesives, as well as more prominent items such as energy efficient appliances, rainwater harvesting, and the skillful use of recycled materials.

While few builders include everything on the list, it is an invaluable resource for both seasoned and new green builders alike.

“For those new to green building it shows what is possible,” says Kevin Ward, owner of SouthEast Ecological Design. “For veteran green builders, it helps set goals and prioritize elements with clients.”

The WNC Green Building Council not only provides credibility for Green Builders, it also puts other sources of green at our fingertips, publishing 25,000 copies of their Green Building Directory annually. This publication includes a comprehensive list of builders, developers, architects, furnishings, and anything you might need to purchase, build, or remodel a home.

Yet, they do more than certify and network, they keep the industry focused on one thing—staying responsible to sustainability. As green technologies and practices are incorporated into mainstream building because they simply make sense, green builders must continue to challenge what they know. Through the WNC Green Building Council, industry leaders in Asheville have the opportunity to collaborate and keep pushing the envelope.

“With the help of the WNC Green Building Council, Asheville is going to teach the whole Southeast about what it means to be Green,” says James Boren, of Green Earth Developments, LLC.

To learn about these programs, as well as the builders’ hotline, monthly green building tours, and the new “Green Gauge” program focusing on greening up existing homes, visit wncgbc.org.

