

## DREAM IN GREEN



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The model house for Zinn Design Build's Claremont is a four-story structure that is 'green' as well as Energy Star certified, which means that it is at least 20 percent more energy efficient than homes built to standard code.

### Customer demand feeds the need for environmentally friendly building

BY NANCY E. OATES  
CORRESPONDENT

The Parade of Homes this year caters to people who dream in color – especially if that color is green.

The annual showcase of new homes, sponsored by the Home Builders Association of Durham, Orange and Chatham Counties, opened this weekend and includes a record 133 homes, trampling on gloomy reports of a slump in housing starts nationwide.

“This is a record number of homes by a wide margin,” said Nick Tenneyson, executive vice president of the HBADOC. “We’ve had fewer homes in Orange County than we’re used to, but a tremendous number in Chatham – 52, which is more than double the number in previous years.”

Green building has flourished in the Triangle, particularly in Orange and Chatham counties. Where past tours may have had a house or two emphasizing its environmentally friendly or healthy living features, the 2007 Parade has entire communities of green-built homes. The developers of The Parks at Meadowview in Pittsboro, Willowbend in Hillsborough, and Claremont and Winmore in Carrboro are paying particular attention to land use and home siting. Many, if not all, of the houses built in them will be certified by the Green Building Council.

The HBADOC was among the first home builders associations in the nation to adopt the Green Building Initiative guidelines. Fueled by customer

#### 2007 PARADE OF HOMES

Parade homes are open to the public free of charge from noon to 5 p.m. Sept. 29-30, Oct. 5-7 and Oct 12-14. Information about the entries is available at [www.hbadoc.com](http://www.hbadoc.com); Parade books are available at Durham, Chapel Hill and Pittsboro Harris Teeter stores, Chamber of Commerce offices, real estate offices and the HBA office.



Each house in Hopper & Byrd Construction's Willowbend, a 16-home cluster subdivision, is certified as Energy Star and green-built. Every house has both a front and a screened porch. Green building and energy saving features include a sealed crawl space and a tankless hot water system.

demand and new materials available through suppliers, local builders see the appeal of green.

“Consumers for quite a while were choosing granite countertops over green

building attributes,” Tenneyson said. “We’re starting to see that change.”

As the houses on Parade show, home buyers can have luxury and healthy, energy-efficient, environ-

mentally friendly places to live.

In Chatham County, construction crews are picking their way gingerly through the trees to begin building the first of what will be 576 homes on 795 acres (about 400 of which will be kept undeveloped) just outside of Pittsboro. A consultant with Audubon International walks each lot with the builder to determine how to site the house to preserve as much as natural flora and fauna as possible. The developer, Crescent Communities, rerouted a couple of streets to avoid disrupting animal migration patterns. The gated community of luxury homes will have its own botanical garden and will use recycled water for all landscaping.

Mike Tarr, owner of Commonwealth Construction and Design, is one of seven builders in The Parks at Meadowview. A member of the HBADOC's Green Building Council, Tarr has been a strong proponent of green building since the movement started a few years ago. All the homes he builds, in every price range, are green-built certified.

“Initially, builders had some resistance to the green building initiative, because it does raise the price of the house, but it’s worth it,” Tarr said. “The builders who don’t get on this train are going to get left at the station, because it is one of the most popular building trends in the 35 years I’ve

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been building houses.”

Tarr has three houses at The Parks at Meadowview, ranging in price from \$935,000 to \$1.2 million. The homes, between 5,000 and 5,600 square feet, have the gracious design details expected of a million-dollar house, as well as the mechanics that make it energy efficient and healthy. The HVAC system, for instance, is outfitted with MERV-11 filters. Not only is air filtered as it enters the ventilation duct work, but once it is heated or cooled, it passes through an extra-thick, multi-layered filter before it re-enters the house.

“Ecologically friendly, healthy, and energy-saving,” Tarr said. “Those are the three things that most people are willing to pay more for.”

With the opening of Winmore and Claremont, Carrboro has two new green communities. Winmore, the larger of the two, will have 96 single-family homes and 86 townhouses, 20 of which will be live/work units of ground-floor commercial space with living space above. Townhouses will sell for less than \$300,000; single-family homes will be priced between \$500,000 and \$1 million. Thirty of its 66 acres will remain as open space, in the form of orchards, mulch trails, and bird and butterfly habitats.

Zinn Design Build’s Claremont blossoms right next door, with a 6,000 square-foot Swedish cottage. The four-story model on Parade is larger than any of the 56 single-family green-built



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The model house for Zinn Design Build’s Claremont is Energy Star certified.

homes (each offered between \$600,000 and \$750,000) or 10 duplexes (asking less than \$300,000) that the Zinns plan for the rest of the development. In addition to being green-built, each home will be Energy Star certified, designed to be at least 20 percent more energy efficient than homes built to standard code. Power companies give Energy Star homes a 5 percent discount on their monthly power bills.

Design details make Claremont’s model home a standout. Transoms above the doors and windows are cross-hatched, and the exterior trim is painted in two contrasting colors that set off the siding of palest green. Zinn makes the most of color inside, too, using

metallic paint here, dark or bright colors there, and splashes of earth hues and toned-down white as accents. Much of the cabinetry and interior trim is painted not stained. Each Zinn house has its own signature newel post, and this home’s are fluted. Each fireplace has a different mantel and surround.

The Zinns look for ways to replace 90-degree angles in their homes. This house has gently curving, not-quite-bay windows in the breakfast nook and master bedroom, and a barrel ceiling in the master bath. The formal dining room is an octagon.

Though the home’s green features are hidden, the Zinns are no less exacting in their attention to construction details. A

special framing technique allows extra insulation to be tucked in the walls. Low-E glass screens out excess ultraviolet rays. Low VOC (volatile organic compound) carpets reduce air-borne allergies. A rain sensor keeps the landscape irrigation system from overwatering.

“Now is the time to change the way we build,” said Omar Zinn, who oversees construction. “That’s what people want, so that’s what we provide.”

Buyers don’t have to be deep in the black to live green. Hopper & Byrd Construction has opened Willowbend, a 16-home cluster subdivision of three- and four-bedroom single-family houses offered from the mid-\$200,000s to the mid-\$300,000s. Modestly sized from 1,600 to 2,400 square feet, each house is certified as Energy Star and green-built.

To create neighborliness, Hopper & Byrd laid five-foot wide sidewalks on both sides of the road and wove walking trails through undeveloped land around the perimeter. Every house has both a front and a screen porch. Green building and energy saving features include a sealed crawl space and a tankless hot water system.

Green-built homes come in bronze, silver and gold categories, the good, better, best levels, depending on the amount and complexity of the green features. When selecting green building features, buyers often take into consideration how long it will take for the attribute to pay for itself in energy cost savings.

“Green houses aren’t just for the elite,” Tarr said. “If you can’t build green in an entry-level home, you shouldn’t be a green builder.”