

Maryland Builder Sets a High Standard for Green Building Education with Eco-Model Home

“Going Green” has become somewhat of a catchphrase in building. From local builders to manufacturers of products like paint and lumber, everyone is touting their environmental responsibility and advertising terms like “low VOC,” “solar PVs” and “R-value.” With a steeply increased demand for healthier, more energy efficient homes, it is becoming a real challenge for homebuyers to sift through the claims and decide which items to care about when building and buying a home.

Mike Baldwin, president of Baldwin Homes, Arnold, MD, is doing something about that. His new, sustainable development, the Preserve at Severn Run in Gambrills, MD, features one of the county’s first LEED certified model homes: the Emerson Eco-Model. While this model home showcases Mike’s building expertise and artful aesthetic styling, it’s really more of an educational setting in which Green features like insulation, LED lighting, sun tunnels and tank-less water heaters are fully explained and exposed.

“A Green home can look like any other home in the neighborhood,” says Mike. “But the thing that makes it stand out as a better choice for people building and buying homes today is that a Green home performs better.”

Baldwin Homes’ Eco-Model includes 69 Green features and boasts 5 Green certifications [Energy Star, Building America, NAHB Emerald, LEED Gold and Environments for Living Green]. It was awarded Maryland’s *2009 Green Home of the Year* by the Home Builders Association of Maryland. And yes, it looks like any other spacious, attractive home on any neighborhood street. “We wanted to create a place where potential homebuyers can see the tangible results of our philosophy of blending beauty with high performance,” Mike notes. “First, though, we had to open up the walls and floors so

people can see how Green/sustainable products and building methods work for them and how these features save money and provide a higher degree of comfort. We want people to understand why we place such importance on things like spray foam insulation, or rain water collection and retention systems, or low-emissivity coatings on glazed windows.”

The Preserve at Severn Run was the ideal place for Mike to construct his forward-thinking Eco-Model. The Preserve got its start while protecting the nearby Jabez Branch stream and a rare breed of local trout. Baldwin Homes worked closely with Anne Arundel County to implement a unique, eco-friendly storm water management system for the area, and thanks to this system, the trout are safe, the water is clean and the community is rooted in a sustainable area. Also, due to a vigilant debris management and recycling plan, over the scope of the Eco-Model project more than 15 tons of waste was recycled.

The Eco-Model, a “model” home in many ways, is constructed with first-rate Green products, some of which hit closer to home than one might think. For example, the recycled drywall (made of 99% pre- and post- consumer recycled content) is a local product, as is the recycled asphalt which is manufactured within 5 miles of the jobsite. Additional Green features include energy efficient windows, skylights, a sun tunnel, a tank-less hot water heater, a Lennox sunsource heat pump, LED lights, cork and bamboo flooring, environmentally-friendly paint and numerous Energy Star appliances. What does all this mean for the homeowner? For starters: a healthier, more comfortable living environment.

As energy costs continue to rise, it has become increasingly important for Baldwin Homes to design and build Green homes that are both energy efficient and affordable. The Eco-Model is fully insulated with InsulStar Spray Foam Insulation, which eliminates air leakage and saves up to 50% on yearly heating and cooling costs while also blocking

dust, pollen, mold and even sound. Additionally, the Pella Low E windows and doors help reduce heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer, and the Energy Star appliances save tremendously on water and energy conservation.

The numerous Green features are unobtrusively incorporated into the home so that the way of life for homeowners is neither disrupted nor negatively altered. Just the opposite: in a Green home, homeowners are able to embrace a higher quality of life with a healthier, more comfortable, more efficient home which will continue to provide payback for years to come.

Other builders are sitting up and taking notice of Mike Baldwin's ideas, and he welcomes that. In fact, he created a Green Learning Center in a revamped shed that existed on the property when building began. This Center (in combination with the Eco-Model) is a way to educate others about quality Green/sustainable building techniques and products. "I want other builders, realtors, architects and homebuyers to see and touch the things that can make their businesses and lives better. We host educational events, seminars and tours all the time. The more we learn from one another, the better homes we can build."

Green building makes good sense on many levels: money savings, healthier air quality, decreased maintenance, greater energy efficiency and higher resale value, to name a few. Top that off with a reduced carbon footprint, and it becomes clear why Green is becoming more and more mainstream. Thanks to caring, forward-thinking builders like Mike Baldwin, Green homes are truly attainable, and with the continuing increase in these attractive, sustainable homes, the future for homebuyers looks brighter, healthier and easier on the checkbook.