
New Hampshire Union Leader - Sunday News - January 4, 2009

Builder hopes going 'green' will bring in the green

By JASON SCHREIBER
Sunday News Correspondent
[Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009](#)

SANDOWN – From the outside, it looks like just another house in the neighborhood.

But inside, the 1,900-square-foot colonial at 12 Alexis Lane is anything but typical.

"I built this as a colonial and put it on steroids," Norman Mancusi said with a laugh as he offered a peek inside a two-story house unlike anything else he's built.

With its geothermal heating and cooling system, foam insulation, sustainable bamboo flooring, and other energy-efficient features, the house is Mancusi's attempt at a new approach to home building that he hopes will have him seeing green.

At the urging of his eco-savvy son, the Hampstead builder has decided to change his ways, even as a slump in the housing market is taking a toll on new home construction.

By going green -- really, really green -- the 52-year-old owner of Mancusi Builders is convinced that he'll have the edge over the competition in a state where builders have been slower to embrace the green approach than in other parts of the country.

"It's a struggle," he said, "but we've got a unique product here. We're really working off of an old body with a new function."

Changing market

Times may be tough, but Mancusi and others say there's a growing market for green buildings, even though they tend to be more expensive. Realizing the potential, Mancusi has decided to build only sustainable and environment-friendly homes with alternative energy sources.

"To a lot of guys, this is scary to them. They've been nail-bangers all their lives," Mancusi said.

The new house, which is on the market for \$399,900, will be Mancusi's first to be certified under the strict green building rating system provided by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

LEED is a third-party certification program through the U.S. Green Building Council that lists several criteria and requires careful inspections to determine whether a building can be considered a truly high-performance green building.

The LEED certification is a rigorous, time-consuming and costly process, but Mancusi said it's worth it.

"This is the real McCoy," Mancusi said, pointing to his new home's many features that, he said, will make it the first in southern New Hampshire to become LEED certified.

Truly green

Matt Root, green building manager for Massachusetts-based Conservation Services Group, said it's important for builders to have their buildings certified to prove that they're truly green.



Norman Mancusi, owner of Mancusi Builders, hopes the "green" home his company built at 12 Alexis Lane in Sandown leads to more projects of its kind. (COPURTESY)

Conservation Services Group is one of several companies that inspect buildings seeking to become certified under the LEED program.

"Everyone is talking green, and the question is how do you believe them? I believe you need some independent third-party certification. You need somebody else standing by the claim," he said.

Among the features of Mancusi's new Sandown home is a geothermal heating and air conditioning system, a unit that costs about a third more than the traditional gas-fired system he usually installs in his homes. However, Mancusi said, the efficiency of the system will lead to a 75 percent reduction in energy costs for heating and cooling the home.

The geothermal system installed by Ultra Geothermal in Barrington uses no fossil fuels. Instead, it draws heat from the earth and delivers it to the home.

The new home also uses more efficient closed-cell foam insulation, which was sprayed throughout the home from the attic to the basement. Mancusi said the

insulation is so efficient that at any time of the year the temperatures in the attic and basement will vary by just a couple of degrees from the main floor.

Energy-efficient lights and appliances were also installed, along with plumbing fixtures that cut water consumption and other building materials that reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. Mancusi said he even used drought-resistant plantings as part of the landscaping on the two-acre property to save on water.

A growing trend

Much of Mancusi's inspiration has come from his 22-year-old son, Nick, a student of organic architecture at Taliesin, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture in Arizona.

"He was telling me, 'Dad, they're doing this all over the country. You should get right on the ground floor on this,'" the elder Mancusi said.

Father took son's advice and ran with it.

And he's not alone. Officials in the building industry say more builders are beginning to catch on to the idea that going green is the future, and attendance at last month's annual Greenbuild International Conference and Expo supports them; more than 28,000 passed through the doors of the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center Nov. 19-21.

While buyers want homes that are more affordable, they also want them green. That's why the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of New Hampshire a few months ago introduced Build Green New Hampshire, a verification and certification program similar to LEED.

The program provides several criteria, such as energy-efficiency benchmarks, that must be met for a building to qualify as green.

"We're encouraging builders in our association, as well as suppliers, to embrace green building technologies," said Kendall Buck, executive vice president of Home Builders and Remodelers Association of New Hampshire.

"We feel the buying consumers are going to quickly become knowledgeable and will be looking for those from builders and remodelers," Buck said.