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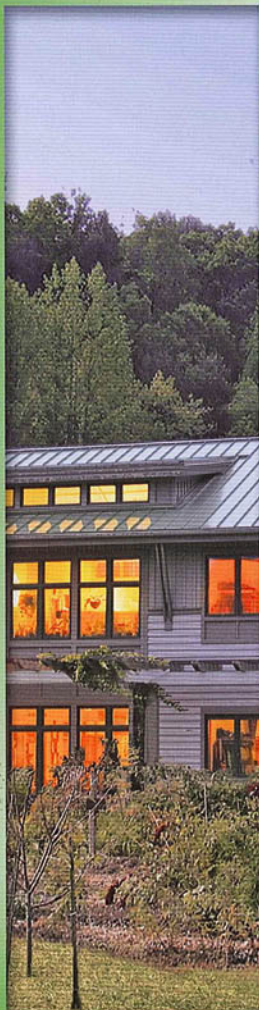
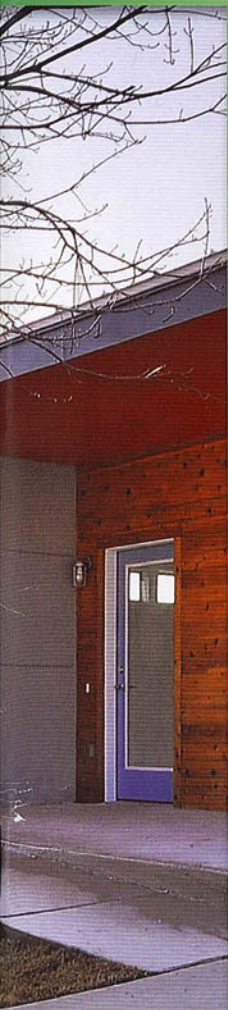
The Business Management Resource for Homebuilding Professionals™

Volume 21, Number 8  Issue No. 236



www.bdmag.com

August 2011 \$10.00



From the Carolinas to Hawaii, Homebuilders Go Green

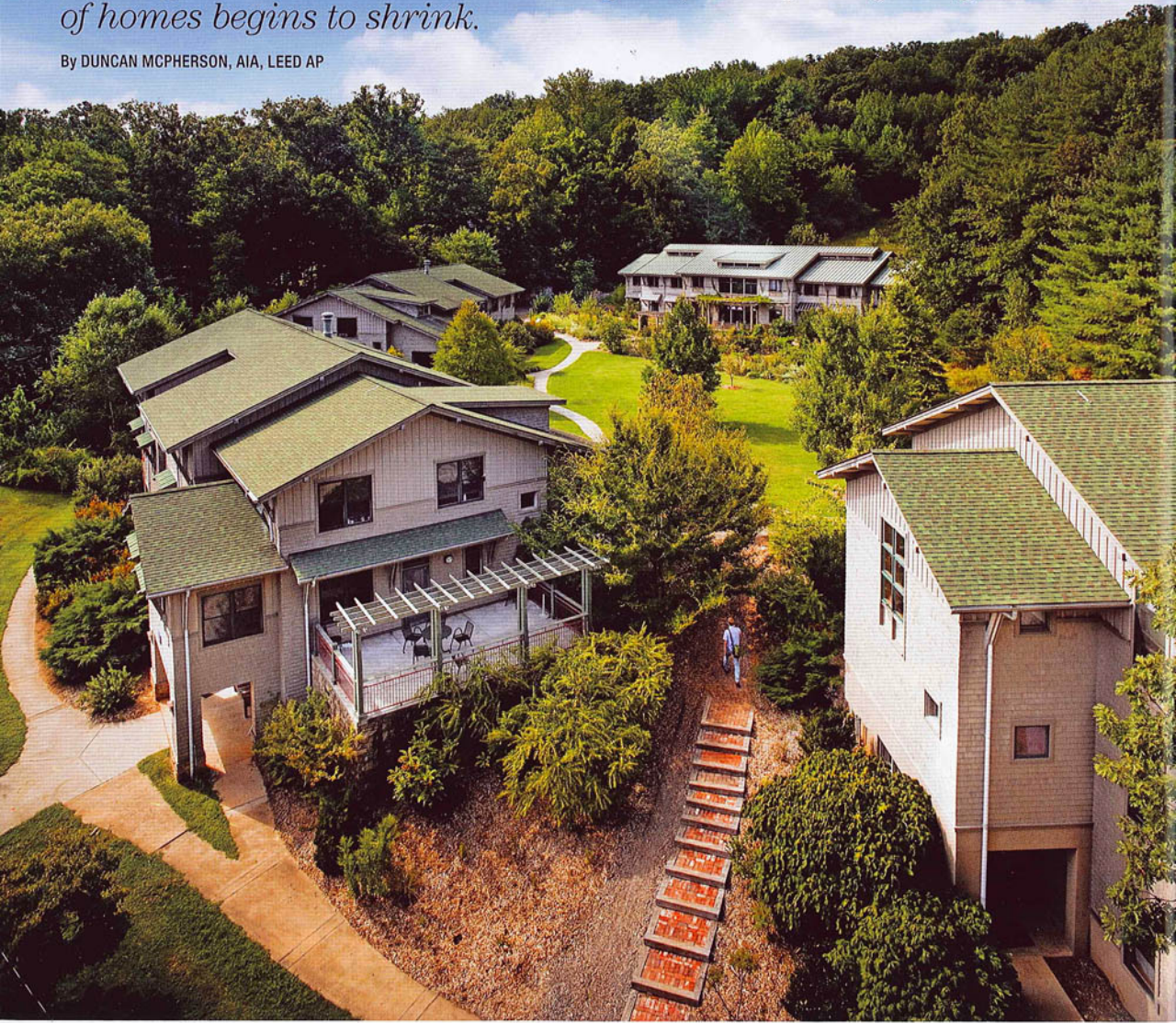


Architect's Perspective: Samsel Architects

Smaller, Smarter, Greener: The Evolving Residential Market

As the green market continues to grow, the square footage of homes begins to shrink.

By DUNCAN MCPHERSON, AIA, LEED AP





The slow economy over the past several years is requiring that we once again learn to do more with less. In 2008, the trend of American homes increasing in size finally came to an end after 40 years of near constant growth. The Urban Land Institute has coined this new time period the Era of Less, which has become evident in the evolving residential market. Tighter budgets have meant a desire for greater practicality and high functioning living space.

Market trends have shifted to smaller, lower priced homes in more urban settings for a variety of factors. New-homebuyers are more cautious now and view a new home as a long term investment with issues such as proximity to schools and low utility bills outweighing soaking tubs and wine chillers. Resale values are now about SEER ratings on HVAC equipment and HERS ratings on ENERGYSTAR homes.

According to U.S. census data, housing starts have dropped over 50 percent since 2007, however, the percentage of ENERGYSTAR rated homes have doubled in the same time period. Further more, according to McGraw-Hill Construction's Green Outlook 2011 report, the value of total green building construction starts was up 50 percent from 2008 to 2010. It is clear that energy-efficiency and green building features are not a passing fad and have, in fact, thrived in the slow

▲ **A HOME OR ROOM CAN LIVE AND FEEL MUCH LARGER THAN IT REALLY IS THROUGH GOOD SPACE PLANNING.**

▶ **ENERGY-EFFICIENT AND GREENER HOMES HAVE CONTINUED TO GROW IN MARKET SHARE DESPITE THE SLOW ECONOMY.**

◀ **INTERACTION WITH NEIGHBORS AND A BROADER COMMUNITY IS A BASIC SOCIAL NEED THAT HOMEBUYERS ARE RECONNECTING WITH.**

economy.

Samsel Architect's core values were founded during the post-oil crisis days of the energy efficiency movement. Since then, the U.S. housing market's interest in energy-efficiency has ebbed and flowed, however, fundamental goals of a savvy homebuyer have emerged during that time that consist of: low operating costs, a high level of comfort and healthy living. Developers and designers will need to adjust to the new priorities of the housing market by providing more bang for the buck in three areas: energy-efficiency, functional living and convenient location.

Sexy green building features have lost some



luster. As homeowners and buyers become more educated and aware of the benefits and return on investments of green building, features that are visually gratifying but have longer payback times, such as photovoltaic and green roofs, are becoming less of a priority. Meanwhile the meat and potatoes of green building - air-tight envelopes, high levels of insulation and indoor

ARCHITECT'S FREQUENTLY USED PRODUCTS

APPLIANCES: WHIRLPOOL
CARPET: MILLIKEN
COUNTERTOPS, LAMINATES/PLASTICS: WILSONART
DECKING: IPE - IRONWOOD
DOORS: MARSHFIELD
DRYWALL: US GYPSUM
ELECTRICAL FIXTURES: LUTRON
ELEVATORS: WAUPACA
FAUCETS: HANS GROHE
GARAGE DOORS: CARRIAGE HOUSE
HVAC: CLIMATE MASTER
INSULATION: ICYNENE
LIGHTING: BK LIGHTING
PAINT: BENJAMIN MOORE
ROOFING: ENGELERT
SIDING: JAMES HARDIE
SOFTWARE: ARCHICAD
TILE: CROSSVILLE
TOILETS: TOTO
TUBS / SHOWERS: AMERICAN STANDARD
WASHERS / DRYERS: WHIRLPOOL
WATER HEATERS: AO SMITH
WINDOWS: HURD



▲ AIR-TIGHT ENVELOPES,
 HIGH LEVELS OF INSULATION
 AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY
 ARE A SOLID PART OF THE
 NEW RESIDENTIAL MARKET'S
 APPETITE.

◀ DESPITE SMALLER
 BUDGETS, PEOPLE STILL
 VALUE AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT
 HOME THAT IS HEALTHY AND
 COMFORTABLE TO LIVE IN.

that are located near transportation routes, employment and recreation have fared much better than suburban McMansion neighborhoods in sprawling communities. Urban infill lots with smaller homes and smaller yards to maintain have become more appealing to buyers again.

While everyone needs a sense of privacy and respite in their home, interaction with neighbors and a broader community is also a basic social need that homebuyers are reconnecting with. Aging Boomers want more social connectivity than in previous generations and the Gen-X and Gen-Y buyers with young families are as conscious of drive times and transportation costs as the Boomers were in the late 70's. Commuting time and fuel expenses are affecting homebuyers' lifestyles more now than they were 10 years ago.

It is unpredictable whether the smaller is better mentality will last when the economy fully rebounds, however, energy-efficient and greener homes have continued to grow in market share despite the economic slow down. In fact it may have grown in part because of the slow economy. These factors indicate a broad shift in the residential market that the building industry will need to react to in order to provide the right housing for a new era of homebuyers.



Duncan McPherson, AIA, LEED AP is a principal at Samsel Architects, P.A. in Asheville, NC. For more information, visit www.samselarchitects.com or contact him at Duncan@samselarchitects.com.



Meanwhile the meat and potatoes of green building are a solid part of the new residential market's appetite.

air quality - are a solid part of the new residential market's appetite. Despite smaller budgets, people still value an energy-efficient home that is healthy and comfortable to live in. These priorities have endured despite smaller budgets.

It's not the total square footage; it's how you use it. A home or room can live and feel much larger than it really is through good space planning. Smarter design that addresses the specific needs of modern living can do more in less space. Here are a few simple examples:

Spaces that are used the most should get the most space. Palatial bedrooms have less value per square foot today.

Interior living spaces that connect directly to

exterior spaces expand the usable living area for most of the year. High functioning outdoor living, even at a small scale, allows indoor spaces to expand and seem much larger.

Spaces can serve dual purposes when integrated for storage, laundry, desk space, etc.

Guest bedrooms can serve as a flex space, home office or play room when these functions are included in the initial design process.

Where we build can be just as important as what we build. People are moving back to urban areas to be closer to jobs, schools and services. The instability of fuel prices has pushed homeowners towards living closer to where they work and play, so developments