Bringing together the Big Four

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Il joined the Southwest Florida Branch of USGBC's Florida Gulf Coast Chapter in 2011 with a particular enthusiasm for improving our community's appreciation of the true value of greener real estate. I'm a realtor in one of America's hottest residential marketplaces, and recently earned my NAR Green Designee – a realtor's credential for understanding the green home marketplace. But it's still a chicken-and-egg problem down here on the peninsula... so many green homes, but so little information about how to evaluate, appraise, and sell to green-seeking buyers.

Earlier this year, I was chosen as co-chair to lead USGBC's *Highlight Green Homes Campaign* – our community's initiative to improve education and valuation for green homes. By and large, we rely on a Multiple Listing Services (MLS) to collect and display information about for-sale properties. If we "green" it, what will come? My co-chair, Sean Smith, a dynamic green builder and volunteer with the Colorado State Energy Commission and USGBC-Colorado, has proven that better information flows for buyers and sellers is a direct and tangible benefit of a Green MLS. Improved education and, ultimately, valuation... here we come!

So what is a "green MLS" anyway? I asked Courtney Baker, USGBC's Manager of Residential Programs. He said, "Basically, it's the added infrastructure to the existing real estate listing system necessary to communicate the energy and environmental attributes of a property from seller to buyer by way of realtors. That information is also important for appraisers and financial institutions so they can accurately value those green attributes." While the list of attributes certainly could be endless, realtors like me find that green building labels such as LEED, HERS and Energy Star offer a simple and credible means to communicate that information.

In order for Greening the MLS to really take root here in Southwest Florida, we decided that we needed to have group alignment between what I call "the Big Four" in the housing industry: builders, appraisers, financial institutions, and realtors. We brought these key players to the table two weeks ago to begin imagining what was possible.

Our event included two dozen individuals from critical Big Four perspectives. The presentations focused on all the important things these audiences need to know, like: why a green MLS is important, which documents an appraiser needs (and that we already have) to assist in the valuation of an energy efficient home, how to assess the energy efficiency of a home; what federal financing opportunities exist for mortgaging these greener homes, and so much more.

The event was an important milestone for the green building movement in the sunshine state. With all the right parties represented and at the table, we began what is sure to be a long journey towards a smarter real estate system that will not only reward green home investments by builders and homeowners, but will also enable buyers and sellers of green homes to find what they're looking for.

Though our journey is far from over, we're excited about our progress to date. Has your MLS evolved to recognize and reward you for the green investments you've made in your home? Join our *Highlight Green Homes Campaign* and let's get this thing moving!

Tony Richardson
Broker/Owner

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Kenneth J. Filarski 2 years 19 weeks ago

Principal and Founder, FILARSKI/ARCHITECTURE+PLANNING+RESEARCH

Great example of what can be done in the marketplace. Congratulations!

Jeremy Sigmon 2 years 19 weeks ago

Director, Technical Policy, U.S. Green Building Council

Thanks for all your hard work and leadership on this issue, Tony!

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