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3RD ANNUAL GREEN BUILDINGS SUMMIT

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To LEED or not to LEED: The NGBS Alternative Certified Green Homes & “Green for Green”

When developing a “green” residential product, you have a choice to make.

Choose LEED or the National Green Building Standards (NGBS). Each is a credible, green rating system with some degree of oversight and third party verification; however, NGBS is considerably more economical and flexible and that is reflected in the real world data.

In spite of the lackluster housing economy, Delaware is getting a boost from increasing green certified home sales and a State-sponsored homebuyer rebate program for buyers of green homes. This rebate program applies to both LEED and NGBS certified homes constructed and sold in the State of Delaware.

In one county in Delaware, New Castle, there was a 29 percent increase in building permits between 2009 and 2010 and yet the number of green certified homes rose by 400 percent. This represents a jump from 3 percent of all homes built in the county certified green in 2009 to 10 percent in 2010.

Delaware has the distinction of the first gold certified home in the Nation and ranks 4th in the Nation in green homes certified under the



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NGBS per capita which represents almost 200 homes compared to less than five certified under the LEED program.

Clearly, certified green homes are becoming a larger part of the homebuilding picture and the National Green Building Standard is leading the way. Homebuilders have recognized the value of using the NGBS over LEED because of the ease of use, flexibility and reasonable costs associated with the Standard.

Buyers are clearly recognizing the value of certified green homes with regard to energy and water savings and they are being rewarded through participation in a State sponsored rebate program “Green for Green” (G4G).

G4G rebates range from \$3,000 to \$6,000 depending on the level of certification. Silver-rated certified homes, which are constructed to be 16 percent more energy efficient than homes built to the State’s energy code, earn \$3,000 rebates. At the other end, an Emerald-rated home, which will be constructed to be about 45 percent better than the energy code, earns a \$6,000 rebate.

Besides energy efficiency, a certified green home must demonstrate, through independent verification, water efficiency, improved indoor air quality performance and resource efficiency before being certified. This also results in 20 percent or greater

reductions in carbon emissions over a typical “code-built” home. Additionally, the home site must respect the surrounding environment, and the homebuyers must receive green educational tools to help understand and maintain their certified green home.

All of this has helped to make the G4G program a resounding success. Last year, 16 homes in Delaware received rebates in the program, which did not launch until June 2010. Through April of this year, 18 homes have already settled, and another 45 are approved and awaiting settlement in 2011. LandmarkJCM’s Accredited Verifiers are the third most active verifiers in the nation and have contributed to the dramatic increase in green homes from 2009 to 2010.

Clearly, homebuyers are seeing the value of buying new homes and certified green homes over existing homes and the National Green Building Standard has become the green rating system of choice in this marketplace.

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