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Golden Triangle goes 'green' with area's first LEED home

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Nashville's first LEED new construction single-family home is almost done, just months after green home standards were released.

The home near Green Hills is a labor of love for builder Golden Triangle Partners LLC. Multi-family residential LEED projects are turning up, like the planned Terrazo tower, but this home on Old Hickory Boulevard will be the first single-family home if it passes certification.

It's the home of contractor and Realtor Susan Thetford of Golden Triangle. She and her partner Mark Fenelon plan to build two more LEED homes in the same Middleton neighborhood once they've mastered the first one. They want to open the home up for builders, real estate agents and residents to learn from.

LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a national certification developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The LEED for Homes program was released in November 2007, says Mark West, a LEED accredited architect and green building advocate for Middle Tennessee. West is the founder of Exoterra Solutions.

Only one other single-family home is LEED certified in Tennessee - Al Gore's home - but it was retrofitted, West says. Thetford estimates the 5,400-square foot home would sell for \$1.8 million.

The market for green homes will have to change, Fenelon says, to where buyers are willing to pay more up front for the benefit of paying less on their energy and water bills.

"Until the market says 'I won't buy your house until you do this, [builders] won't do it,'" he says.

Thetford and Fenelon say it will be only a few years before green becomes the standard. Already, all new Metro buildings with more than 5,000 square feet are required to be LEED certified.

LEED wants builders to focus on all home sizes. West is working on a future project that would bring low-income LEED housing to East Tennessee.

"The goal of the U.S. Green Building Council is to make the top 25 percent of homes in the market LEED homes. That doesn't mean the top most expensive homes," he says.

Building the home wasn't been easy. When cement with 30 percent fly ash or recycled material was ordered, most local suppliers were confused. West says LEED wants to develop a green building permitting process to help code issues.

All materials except the home's fireplace came from within 500 miles of Nashville.

Thetford plans to keep track of how much money her home saves compared to the extra cost to build it. It's about 10 to 15 percent extra to make it LEED, she says.

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