

REAL ESTATE & BUSINESS

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Save money, energy with 'green' building materials

While there is a perception in New Jersey that "green building" is a relatively new phenomenon, its main tenets — the minimization of waste, improved energy efficiency, efficient use of resources and "recyclability" — are concepts that have been widely embraced by successful building material dealers for decades.

Many of the veterans in the New Jersey Building Materials Dealers Association think back to the 1970s, when ecology awareness and the rising cost of oil were popular topics of discussion. Customers began asking us how to make their homes more energy efficient through the use of new and different building materials.

Point Of View

By Brian Jaeger

We were certainly impressed by those who took green building to the extreme, constructing "Earth ships" — homes built with old tires filled with dirt. Green building has certainly experienced its growing pains over the years. There have been many attempts, for example, to perfect the solar home. The dropping of oil prices in the early 1990s

created a shift away from green building, though many progressive builders remained resolute and are now leading a reinvigorated movement. As we prepare for a new decade, with record energy prices in New Jersey and beyond, we are entering a golden era for green building. The trend is projected to grow as a share of the overall residential market from just 2 percent in 2005 to between 12 percent and 20 percent in 2012, according to research presented at the National Green Building Conference in New Orleans. Lumber remains the original "green" material, as it is natural, biodegradable, cost-effective, plentiful, renewable, reusable and easy to work with.

There are other green building basics that will greatly improve the performance of your house.

- "Green" windows and doors: The common rule of thumb is to select products with good insulation values, such as double- and triple-paned windows and doors with insulating foam cores.
- Building materials: Incorporating materials that are effective, durable, sustainable and non-toxic is the goal. Ask your building material dealer about how bamboo, cork, cotton insulation and recycled glass countertops can lessen your impact on

the environment.

- Technology of the future: Geothermal heating and cooling systems pull warm or cool air from the earth and pump it into the house for a natural HVAC system. Solar panels can generate enough electricity on a sunny day to allow you to sell power back to your electric company. Remodeling to reduce your carbon footprint and to save money on energy costs is an idea whose time has come.

Bryan Jaeger is the president of Jaeger Lumber in Union.