

Even with market indicators red, interest in green

Ecofriendly building program's draw is more than expected

By JENNIFER ROBISON

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With the city's housing market stumbling in 2008, you might expect local home builders to back off on extras such as ecofriendly construction methods and materials.

Amette Bubak certainly expected a little less interest in a green-building program she oversees.

Bubak is president of Nevada Energy Star Partners, a coalition of home builders, mortgage companies, utilities and construction suppliers dedicated to deploying the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program inside local new homes.

Bubak expected 12 local companies to sign up as partners in 2008. Instead, the program netted more than 30 partners by the time its 2008 campaign ended in September.

"Going into the year, we were a little concerned that builders wouldn't have it in their budget (to contribute funds to the group's media campaign)," Bubak said. "But we found instead that energy conservation is more important to consumers than it's ever been, and builders are even more committed to finding progressive ways to increase the energy efficiency of new homes."

Among Nevada Energy Star Partners' key accomplishments this year: The group got the Las Vegas High-Rise Condominium Association on board in one of just three pilot programs nationwide to create the first Energy Star criteria for condo towers.

By spring, local builders specializing in mid- and high-rise condo communities will have federal EPA guidelines on insulation, duct work, appliances, lighting fixtures and windows federally certified as energy-saving measures.

The Energy Star designation will help condo developers market more effectively to buyers, Bubak said. The Boca Raton development at Las Vegas Boulevard South and Serene Avenue will serve as the pilot's guinea pig.

Credit the sustained interest in sustainable design to two factors: Rising energy costs and consumers' awareness of the carbon footprints their lifestyles leave, said Steve Bottfeld, executive vice president of local real estate research firm Marketing Solutions.

Home buyers want to save money on power bills, and they want to make a smaller impact on the environment. Builders have heeded those demands with Energy Star.

"If a builder adds a core value of energy conservation and climate savvy to their brand, it's a big help to their future," Bottfeld said.

"They're investing in their future. People constantly underestimate builders' appreciation for what's going on in consumers' heads. Builders aren't stupid. They understand where consumers are going."

Today, 67 percent of all new homes built in Las Vegas meet Energy Star standards. That's far and away the top rate in the nation; No. 2 Phoenix lags way behind, in the 35 percent range.

And if Bubak has her way,



Steve Cheney, a technician with Energy Inspectors, takes readings from a pressure meter Friday.

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Nevada Energy Star Partners will make even greater strides in 2009.

The group will partner in the next six months with the EPA on a new initiative called Home Performance with Energy Star.

That program will help owners of existing homes rate their houses for energy efficiency, and it will offer a menu of possibilities for boosting energy conservation in older homes.

In April, Nevada Energy Star Partners won the EPA's Sustained Excellence honor — the sixth consecutive year the state program received the award. It's a string of accolades no other Energy Star chapter in the nation has accomplished.

RESALE HOMES — The number of resale homes on the market in Las Vegas jumped by 359 units to 22,317 homes in the week between Sept. 22 and Sept. 29, a report from business consulting firm Applied Analysis shows. That's the

largest weekly gain in resale inventory since the last week of May 2007. The number of listed, vacant properties rose 399 units in the week.

PROPERTY SALES — CB Richard Ellis broker Jeremy Green represented Kirkorian Enterprises in the \$1.9 million, 65-month lease of 25,308

MILLION-DOLLAR HOME SALE

Luxury Homes of Las Vegas reported the following million-dollar home sale last week:
 ■ \$1,390,000, Summerlin, 1-story with Strip view in Topaz Ridge in The Ridges. Model condition with courtyard entry, Viking appliances, office with wood floors and salt water pool/spa.

square feet of industrial space to Atronic Americas. The property is at 955 Grier Drive. Randy Broadhead, also with CB Richard Ellis, represented Bormann Development Group in the \$1.56 million, 66-month lease of 13,155 square feet of office space to The Powell Litigation Group. The space is inside the Nevada Benefits Building at 9525 Hillwood Drive.

Contact reporter Jennifer Robison at jrobison@reviewjournal.com or 702-380-4512.

INSIDE BUSINESS



Peggy Caspar Laura Harrison

Las Vegas Chamber names vice president

The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce named Margaret "Peggy" Caspar vice president of its member services division.

 Acelero Learning Clark County Head Start named Laur Harrison Head Start program director.

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in the workplace

Interest strong in 'green' building

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