

San Antonio making major push to encourage 'green' building

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The City of San Antonio has tapped the Build San Antonio Green program as its clearinghouse for certifying builders who want to build more efficient homes in San Antonio.

Build San Antonio Green will certify that builders and the homes they construct are in compliance with green-built standards through the use of a scorecard system. The Build San Antonio Green program, which got its start about a year ago, is a non-profit collaboration between Metropolitan Partnership for Energy (MPE) and the **Greater San Antonio Builders Association** (GSABA).

"The scorecard is one of the most exciting things the city has done (for green building)," says Michael Lopez, coordinator for the Build San Antonio Green. "We are willing to step up to the plate to help."

Green built homes are energy and water efficient, take advantage of existing trees and transportation options in the area and use materials that have a low impact on the environment.

There are five basic components to be considered when constructing a green building. They are site development, materials, water conservation, energy efficiency and health benefits.

According to Lopez, builders can choose to follow either the Build San Antonio Green program for building green homes or the standards set up by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

Using standards from one of those programs allows the builder to score points for complying with a variety of green-build standards, explains Ed Davis, assistant director of the city's Economic Development Department. Once the builder has earned 60 points, the city will offer the builder incentives, such as waiving fees for permits on building projects.

"We want to encourage folks to do these types of projects," Davis says.

Green boon

Lopez says within the next year, the San Antonio area could see as many as 400 green-built homes constructed. To date, there are nine green-build homes in San Antonio.

"We will work closely with the building industry," Lopez explains. "And we will really see some growth."

Anita Ledbetter, executive director for MPE, says working with the city to help builders meet green-build standards is a positive move for San Antonio.

"It's a big step," she says. "I see this as the first step of many."

Ledbetter adds that not only does building a green home help protect the environment, it is cost effective for both the builder and the home buyer.

"A lot of people think it's a tree-hugging thing, but it is really not," she says. "It really makes financial sense."

MPE is a nonprofit organization and was created following the passage of Senate Bill 5, The Texas Emissions Reduction Act, in 2001. MPE was formed through a collaboration between the City of San Antonio, City Public Service, Bexar County, the San Antonio Water System, the Alamo Area Council of Governments, VIA Metropolitan Transit, the Greater Bexar County Council of Cities and Solar San Antonio.