



Imagine Homes wins national green builder honor

Web Posted: 05/14/2008 08:58 PM CDT

By Creighton A. Welch

Imagine Homes has made a mark on San Antonio's home building market as the city's only production builder that meets both federal Energy Star guidelines and Build San Antonio Green certification standards.

Now the buzz about Imagine is spreading throughout the country.

Imagine was named the nation's top green builder among companies that build single-family production homes by the National Association of Home Builders on Sunday at its Green Building Conference in New Orleans.

"Imagine Homes has helped lead the way to the market's embrace of green homes, and in many ways is an industry pioneer," Ray Tonjes, chairman of the NAHB Green Building Subcommittee, said in a release announcing the award.

"When a green home doesn't look or feel significantly different from one built using more traditional construction methods, when builders have the tools and resources to build them without significant material or labor cost increases, and when consumers readily accept the finished product, then 'green' has arrived. I think it has," he said.

Local green building advocates agree.



(Courtesy photo)

Imagine Homes built this house near in the Lakeview neighborhood off Texas 151 on the West Side.

“It really is a big thing for Imagine Homes,” said Stephen Colley, a green building coordinator for Build San Antonio Green. “It’s also a big thing for San Antonio. When you think of green building, nobody thinks of San Antonio.”

The company, started by John Friesenhahn and Jim Bastoni, is less than 2 years old. Imagine closed on its first home in November 2006 and has closed on about 110 since then.

“John and I have been building energy-efficient homes since the 1990s,” Bastoni said. “When we started Imagine Homes, it was about taking the building to the next level.”

This is the first year the NAHB has awarded a single-family production builder with a green award.



JOHN FRIESENHAHN

“What we’ve learned is green building is not just a niche business, but will soon be more of the mainstream,” Bastoni said.

In fact, national builder Beazer Homes, one of Imagine’s investors, has begun implementing some of Imagine’s green techniques.

One of the biggest misperceptions about green building is that the costs are much higher than conventional homes, Friesenhahn says. But he says the efficiency measures Imagine takes add only about 2 percent more to the cost of a home.

“We also are committed to doing this in all price ranges of our homes,” Bastoni said.

On The Web:

[Imagine Homes](#)
[Build San Antonio Green](#)
[NAHB release](#)

Imagine’s homes start in the \$130,000s and go up to the \$310,000s.

“This shows to San Antonio that building green does not break the bank,” said Colley of Build San Antonio Green.

He said a recent energy efficiency test found that an Imagine home used one-third less energy than a house that meets the standard building code.

These homes also can be good for your health. By using certain air-conditioning systems and insulation, Imagine’s home are able to reduce allergens and pollutants that might cause residents to become ill.

“The health advantages of a green home are not easy to put a dollar amount on,” Colley said.

Imagine’s founders say their product also shows that their green homes can fit it into a normal neighborhood.

“Green doesn’t necessarily mean a straw-bale, dome home in the country inhabited by hippies,” Colley said. “This is something you look down the street at and you can’t tell it’s different, which really makes people more confident.”

National home building struggles aren’t stopping Imagine, either. “We should double our business this year,” Bastoni said. “Which is why people are paying attention to what we’re doing.”