

# See how 'green' a home really is

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Special Contributor

With "green" homebuilding booming, ads for eco-friendly options abound. How can a homebuyer find out whether a home is truly green?

In some cases, builders sell homes as eco-friendly if any of the materials are from renewable sources, such as bamboo floors.

Others tout homes as green if they simply use less energy than a traditional house, or if the components have fewer of the chemicals commonly considered toxic.

But for a home to be truly green, experts say, it must have all those aspects — and more.

"When you talk about green, it's a combination of everything," says Chris Miles, a principal at GreenCraft Builders in Lewisville.

Sorting out the facts can be a challenge, says Michael Land, president of Plans by Land in Richardson.

"There's a lot of good information out there, but there's a lot of misinformation out there, too," says Mr. Land, a member of the Green Built North Texas Council. "It's an on-going effort."

One way to find good information is to look at certification programs. Most of these require the builder's claims to be verified by a third party.

Energy Star Home is one certification program. Operated under the auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency, it certifies new homes based on energy efficiency. Some cities, including Frisco, now require all new homes to meet Energy Star Home requirements.

A comprehensive program is being rolled out by the U.S. Green Building Council,



GreenCraft Builders

**The Bannister High Performance House in Grapevine, which is almost finished, is expected to receive two certifications for eco-friendliness.**

whose LEED-certification program is considered the standard for green building in commercial projects. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

In 2005, the council, a nonprofit organization of building industry members, began piloting a LEED for Homes program. A national launch is planned for fall.

That program will evaluate homes based on location, water use, energy efficiency, use of sustainable and recycled materials, indoor air quality and environmental impact, says spokeswoman Ashley Katz. The process begins before a builder breaks ground, and

inspectors make checks throughout construction.

"It evaluates the home in a holistic way," Ms. Katz says.

Mr. Miles of GreenCraft has teamed with architect William Peck to build the Bannister High Performance House in Grapevine. The house, which is nearing completion, will be a demonstration project for a Department of Energy program called Building America. He says the home also will be certified by LEED for Homes and by Energy Star.

Meeting all those standards has involved some creativity.

For example, LEED's highest rating re-

## GREEN ASPECTS

What makes the Bannister home green? Here are some of the three-bedroom, 2,385-square-foot home's features:

- \$80 a month average cost for heating and cooling
- Proper solar orientation
- Ventilated radiant barrier roof system
- Spray foam insulation
- Air-sealed attic
- A light exterior color scheme
- Enhanced natural ventilation
- Solar water heating

SOURCE: [www.bannisterhousetexas.com](http://www.bannisterhousetexas.com)

## digitalEXTRA

🔗 **Links:** Learn more about the Bannister High-Performance House, the upcoming Green Built Parade of Homes in Frisco, Energy Star Home and LEED for Homes. [dallasnews.com/extra](http://dallasnews.com/extra)

quires use of local materials so less fuel is needed to transport them. Mr. Miles wanted to put reclaimed flooring in the home — but to meet that requirement, he couldn't buy it from the East Coast, where old-house lumber is plentiful. He finally found some in Galveston. But, he says, "I got funny looks when I went to my lumber guy and asked where the lumber was coming from."

Even if buyers settle on a house that isn't fully green, small steps are helpful.

"It depends," says Mr. Land, "on whether you want to be light green or dark green."