



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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The more things change, the more they stay the same

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The Rhode Island Builders Association's older members will no doubt recall the "environmentally friendly" building trends of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some of our members got involved with solar panels, log homes and even underground houses.

Some of these trends turned into the good, money-saving ideas built into today's new homes: super-efficient insulation, passive solar heating, and clever use of natural lighting. Other trends, however, were "flashes in the pan" as far as the mass market was concerned. Solar panels on the roof proved notoriously hard to clean and maintain, and some of the more alternative homes proved hard to sell, especially when they were underground.

It's a quarter-century later, and what's now called "green building" is back. It's driven by some of the same factors that were present in the '70s, including high energy costs and a genuine concern for the environment. This time, however, many industry experts, including those at the National Association of Home Builders, believe that green building is here to stay.

This belief is reinforced by the fact that there are initial moves by some lawmakers and planners around the country to write green-building techniques into their state or local codes, or at least to set green-building standards.

NAHB's plan is to get out in front of any effort to codify green building so that members can lead, rather than be led by, this movement. RIBA agrees, and member Dan Paquette of DJP Consulting LLC has agreed to head a study committee to see how RIBA can stay out in front of this issue in Rhode Island.

We are firmly and actively behind any reasonable, voluntary building technique that will save energy and minimize human impact on the environment. But we will not stand by and watch green building turned into another excuse for stopping growth or for overregulation.

I ask our members to take advantage of opportunities to learn about green building, and to monitor trends to codify green building in their own communities. Also, let us know your own use of and experiences with green building. Watch RIBA announcements and The Rhode Island Builder Report for more on this issue as it develops.

When it comes to green building, RIBA will lead, not follow, because we are the ones who know the shelter industry.

Thomas McNulty is the president of the Rhode Island Builders Assn., East Providence.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540