



WE BUILD  
 GREEN  
 HOMES FOR  
 HEALTHIER  
 LIVING  
 LEED AND  
 ENERGY  
 STAR  
 CERTIFIED

# VIRGINIA LUXURY HOMES MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## WHAT IS A GREEN "LEED CERTIFIED" HOME AND WHAT IS ITS VALUE?



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This is a question that we are frequently asked as many new custom home buyers become increasingly aware of and interested in the possibility of building a LEED Certified Green home. It is not surprising since The U.S. Green Building Council has found that Green Homes can sell faster and for more money than comparable houses that do not have eco-friendly features. Better yet, Green Homes are increasingly in demand with more than half of all people ranking green and energy efficiency as top requirements for their next home.

Unfortunately, in the past, numerous builders claimed to be building green homes while they were in actuality only adding a single aspect or minimal green features to their traditional builds. That false advertising, coupled with a desire to protect the consumer, led to the creation in 1993 of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) by the U.S. Green Building Council. Their purpose was to create a system that defined and regulated what a certified green home was while combating builders that were claiming to build green homes, but were not. It also elevated the

LEED build process to a definitively higher level of excellence.

They established a LEED process for green built homes that is both rigorous and difficult to attain. Essentially, it is an entire system-based process which is primarily focused on (1) Indoor environmental quality and health (cleaner indoor air to breathe) (2) Energy use and efficiency (dramatic monthly utility reduction/savings on electric, gas, and water bills, and (3) use of superb, environmentally friendly, weather sustainable materials and workmanship, all of which is required to achieve the superior LEED level of build excellence.

LEED is centered on the builder creating and managing an overall system designed to build the new home while doing so in a comprehensive and systematic eco-friendly manner. Points are awarded for various distinctive features used in the home build process. Examples include: Recycling materials from the original dwelling versus demolition and filling the dump with disposable materials; the use of selective building materials (e.g. products from rain forests are strictly prohib-

ited); specialized use of HVAC ducting; comprehensive use of insulation including a green Zip-wall system, foam throughout the build, and a separate foamed structure in the attic to house HVAC equipment while preventing excessive/continual temperature fluctuations; identification of the geographical location from which materials are procured to determine distance/energy required for transportation; LED lighting fixtures; required use of zero or low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) products during the build including paint and chalking; use of water conservation plants for landscaping; specialized water conserving irrigation techniques; and use of solar panels, or geo-thermal.

LEED inspections are continuous from the first day through the conclusion of the build. They are conducted by professional LEED certified inspectors who are specifically LEED trained. While all builders are required to adhere to county build codes, LEED requires their auditors to be far more rigid and demanding in terms of their inspections and documented use of materials. Illustratively, LEED is every bit

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The Newsletter will be distributed to our many friends, including our past, present, and future homeowners, real estate partners, trade contractors, suppliers, and anyone interested and engaged in the home building process. The Newsletter is designed to take the mystery out of the home building process and to showcase the exciting adventure of collectively creating a new home. We will provide you with an insider's look at home building best practices, as well as keep you informed of upcoming events in our area. Each Newsletter will feature one lead article accompanied by customer questions.

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as concerned with what has been constructed “behind the walls” (which are hidden from view) - as they are with what is “visible” to the eye of the home buyer.

Final LEED approval processes include an analysis of duct usage to ensure absence of leakage, venting unit usage in each bathroom, and testing to ensure that the LEED home is as close to 100% air tight as is possible. This comprehensive process results in an incredibly energy efficient home (dramatically lower monthly energy bills) which is also far healthier than traditional builds since it does not have “stale air” resulting from traditional new home build leakage, and instead has clean air which has been filtered of toxins and pollutants. A top- quality build, far superior to the traditional build, is ensured through the use of best materials and workmanship.

LEED is perhaps best known for commercial buildings- nearly half of all new buildings being constructed today are LEED Certified. Unfortunately, only 1% of builders who construct residential homes in the U.S. are qualified, or even capable of building LEED homes. The reason for this is two-fold: (1) because it is difficult to build and attain LEED Certification, and (2) a LEED built home is more expensive up front to construct than a traditional build.

## RECOMMENDATION

We are not environmental zealots at Virginia Luxury Homes. However, we are very sensitive to the environment in which we live. That is the reason why we have been building LEED Certified Green Homes since our beginning as a company. We are also Value Engineers. Being Value Engineers for our customers, we believe it is very important that we are qualified to build LEED Certified Green Homes because a LEED home build offers great VALUE for our customers. To us, LEED is an economic trade-off, an option to be considered in regard to any new home build. It initially costs more to build a green LEED Certified home. However, monthly utility savings are dramatic, the home is healthier, and whenever the home is ready to be re-sold; research has demonstrated that it will sell quicker and at a premium price compared to traditional builds. This is why we are among the 1% of U.S. builders qualified to build LEED homes.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**QUESTION:** Does Virginia Luxury Homes require that their new home builds be LEED Certified?

**ANSWER:** No. We believe it is an option for our customers. During our meetings with prospective clients, we explain LEED and share our opinion – that LEED is an economic trade-off. We will candidly share customer utility bills from our builds and let our customers determine for themselves whether they are interested in investing in LEED. We find that the majority of our customers do request that we build them a LEED Certified home. However, others have chosen to only use select green features - but not the entire LEED build process. This is our client’s prerogative, we honor their decision either way they choose, and we will build their DREAM HOME according to their decision - designed and crafted - according to their specific wants, needs, wishes, and vision - within their budgetary constraints.

**OPEN HOUSE!**  
 Visit us at our Model Open House at 6600 Chesterfield Ave in McLean, Virginia. Contact Cathy Kane at 703-868-1976 for details.



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## QUESTIONS? CALL CATHY & FRANK!



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