

up front

Breathing new life into old houses with market-driven green remodeling

By Marla Esser

Market Driven: determined by or responsive to market forces. *Green:* concerned with or relating to conservation of the world's natural resources and improvement of the environment. *Remodel:* to reconstruct, make over.

Bringing these ideas together, market-driven green remodeling can be defined as a makeover that takes into account conservation and market forces, or profitability. If a house has “good bones” — is architecturally sound, has a workable layout and is in a desired location — it may be a good candidate for a market-driven green remodel.

To meet these goals, the G Home Remodel Program, announced on Aug. 1, 2011, targets professionals who currently remodel at least 10 pre-1980 homes annually, including doing mechanical and landscape work. For these cases, the program improves market performance or appraised value with a turn-key, practical and scalable process.

The G Home brand is the creation of Phillip Beere, a “greenovator,” according to littleBiggy.org. In 2007, Beere founded his company, G Street, which renovates older homes in transit-oriented neighborhoods typically located in the urban core. At a national green building conference in 2010, Phillip hit home with his G Home formula: G Home = older homes in established neighborhoods + green remodeling building science + market-driven approach.

G Street expanded the program through a partnership with Lowe's Commercial Services and the NAHB Research Center. The program extends a packaged offering of services, tried-and-true practices and processes, National Green Building Standard certification, Lowe's product discounts, and G Street marketing and appraisal packages.

Hallmarks of the G Home Program include a plan that incorporates budget, aesthetics and professional design, and demonstrable performance with a G Home Performance Report, similar to the manufacturer sticker displayed on a new car. Design professionals are an absolute must from the beginning. How a home looks and works are tied together and must be considered throughout the project. The G Home Program provides a market-proven approach that takes over where ratings leave off. A G Home experiences fewer days on market and typically appraises for above market, according to Lowe's.

One of the secrets to the success of this program is identifying the best candidates — both in the teams and in the properties selected — for successful, certifiable outcomes. The program specifies the

key team members and their roles, which always include an interior designer from the American Society of Interior Designers, a landscape designer or architect, and a RESNET-approved energy rater. All members of the remodel team are required to be licensed or certified in their respective areas to ensure the quality of the project. These professionals, along with the project owner, contractor, manufacturer representative and real estate professional, begin the work together in the team kickoff meeting that sets the stage and enables a smooth project with all members of the trades on board.

The G Home Program offers remodelers a thoughtful, planned approach to remodeling homes that sell faster and offer a higher quality product for the home buyer or home owner. Michelle Desiderio, director of Green Building Programs at the NAHB Research Center, offers three reasons the program is key to successful green remodels:

1. Packaging of products, practices and processes, especially for remodeling, is a new starting point for every project. The streamlined checklist approach of the G Home Program helps to turn the lessons learned from past projects into practices that work.
2. Design and aesthetics are a critical part of the program from the beginning of every project. Each team must include a design professional to ensure the home is inviting and livable for potential home buyers and home owners.
3. Distribution of training, ideas and support to a wide range of remodelers nationwide. Building on Lowe's existing base of remodeler customers, this market-proven approach can impact how many remodelers do business. The program is also a great tool that Lowe's Commercial Services can offer its customers.

To get professionals acquainted with the program, G Home offers live 60-minute webinars (www.gstreetinc.com/live-60minutes). The webinar explains what it means to remodel green, the standards that guide green remodeling and tips to get started right away. It also gives highlights of the Green Remodel Workshop for the G Home Professional, which is the first step in earning a G Home license. According to G Street, 8000 professional have participated in the workshop since 2008.

The program is not for all houses or remodelers, but it does set the stage for how we can breathe new life into old houses and neighborhoods. It takes the guesswork out of the green remodeling process with its combination of programs, products and green certification. The market-proven process starts with the end in mind — an inviting, livable home with the comfort and performance of a green home. **BW**



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