

Handcraft Homes goes green

Local builder Handcraft Homes, LLC, of Goochland, is building one of the very first homes in the Greater Richmond area under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Homes program.

This program, released in December 2007, is arguably the most stringent certification program in the country for building a home under green guidelines. Handcraft Homes stands to be one of the first homes in Virginia to be certified under this program in the "single-family" category.

LEED for Homes remains the most rigorous and well developed green certification program to date. The first LEED program was developed in 1998 and was geared toward commercial buildings. More than 14,000 projects have been developed under LEED in all 50 states and in 30 countries.

When Handcraft Homes was founded in 2002 by brothers Wayne and Richard Grebe, a commitment to quality was foremost in their minds.

"This was the main reason we entered into the building business," said Wayne Grebe, president and CEO of Handcraft Homes. "We looked around at the homes being built and said, 'We can do better.' And because Handcraft Homes has always been committed to quality, stepping into the green arena was a natural progression. Many aspects of green building are just common sense to a quality-minded builder."

The home is being built in Powhatan for Greg and Allison

Dunaway on a piece of family property.

"It's important to me to set an example for our daughter, that we should all do our part to minimize our impact on the environment," Allison said.

Allison, who works as a regional enforcement manager for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, was especially interested in building a green home.

"I wanted to practice what I preach, so to speak," said Mrs. Dunaway.

Greg Dunaway is a Master Electrician with 10 years of electrical experience.

"I wanted to build a home with low life-cycle costs, especially when considering the unstable and rising costs of energy," he said. "It's a win-win situation, good for my family's day-to-day budget and good for the environment."

He took on the task of all the electrical work on their new home, which required working with structural insulated panels (SIPs), which can provide 40 percent more in energy retention.

"This was my first time working with SIPs," said Greg Dunaway. "Since I was doing the work on nights and weekends, there was no time for a learning curve."

Greg is the director of business operations, PPD for Virginia Commonwealth University.

Laroche Construction performed all of the framing on the Dunaway's house. The house was designed by Watershed Architects of Richmond.

According to Watershed's principal, Patrick Farley, the greatest obstacles to green building becoming more fully utilized are the "...demand for housing driven by awareness of the full spectrum of benefits, affordable alternatives to conventional applications (along with real understanding of first-cost versus life-cycle cost), and availability of professionals with the know-how and education."

Farley has advocated ecologically-sound design for more than 20 years. He earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Virginia and was the first LEED accredited architect in central Virginia. He was also a founder and vice chairman of the James River Green Building Council (JRGC).

Wayne and Richard Grebe both have completed training with Earth Craft House of Virginia, a local company providing green education, training and certifications. A member of the U.S. and James River Green Building Councils, Handcraft Homes is continually reassessing their methods and materials.

"I believe green building practices are essential to the betterment of the standards of health, of individuals and the environment, not to mention the long-term financial benefits of homeowners," said Richard Grebe, vice-president and operations manager. "I would like to someday say, 'I helped thousands of builders and home buyers build a home with a better planet stewardship in mind.'"

Many point to the difficulties involved in affording or constructing a green home.

"The most problematic aspect of green building is having sub-contractor familiarity with products, and the product's best form of assembly and integration within the context of the architect's design," Grebe said. "...Good communication is paramount in green building."

Greg Dunaway said that the most challenging aspect of building a green home was staying within budget.

"However, I think we have shown that you can build healthy and green and not have an astronomical budget," he said. "We tried to incorporate systems that will allow us to further improve the efficiency of our home in the future, as budget and pricing permits. The roof system is set up to allow for 'vegetated roofing' and the electrical is set up to allow for photovoltaic or wind generation once prices and technology become feasible."

Wayne Grebe acknowledged that building green does take more effort and usually costs more, the advantages and benefits far outweigh any difficulty.

"We face a much broader and bigger challenge in our global environment. But that environment is not a thing, it is us," he said. "We need to stop looking at our world as being separate from us. You cannot describe a human being without referring to the context in which it lives. We all need to start living like the planet is our own body, which, in fact, it is."

Second chance for golf village

By Shayna Strang

Three months later and about 100 units fewer, a Fluvanna County golf course's plan for a residential community has received approval from the supervisors and the community.

The original plan from Rivanna Woods Golf Course and Resort, which included 348 residential units in 13 buildings, was denied by the board of supervisors in February.

At the board's May 20 meeting, the company made a new request to rezone approximately 230 acres from agricultural (A-1) to planned community (R-3). There is currently a commercial resort and golf course on the property.

"They've taken something that was unacceptable and they have made it acceptable," said Gene Ott (Rivanna). "This is first class."

The proposed development, known as The Point at the Rivanna Resort, would include 254 residential units spread across the property in five neighborhoods with 28 percent age-restricted housing. Each residential area would include duplexes, villas or two-story flats.

"The new plan has clearly responded to the issues raised from the previous applications," said Steven Plusko, Rivanna Woods representative. "The key element in the design process was to ensure that overall our project had a rural residential feel as opposed to a more traditional suburban-type layout."

Some residents still expressed their concerns with the development, despite the changes.

"This design is so much better," said Erin Wise-Ackenbom. "There are communities and little neighborhoods. I'm still concerned with the massive size of the proposed units."

A commercial area, located

The Rivanna Woods Golf Course and Resort is located on Rt. 15 next to Camp Friendship.

toward the entrance of the property, would include an outdoor plaza and three buildings totaling 75,000 square feet. Other amenities would include a two-mile riverwalk pedestrian and bicycle trail, public recreational centers, pool, driving range and picnic area.

"They have raised the bar in architectural standards," said Chris Fairchild of the Fluvanna County Economic Development Committee, adding that the commercial section would be built in accordance with the Palmyra Firehouse design. "This is a quality development designed in harmony with our comprehensive plan, our goals and visions for the future."

In an effort to address concerns regarding the traffic impacts of the new development, Rivanna Woods has proffered to complete transportation improvements as recommended by a traffic impact analysis and the Virginia Department of Transportation and will pay \$50,000 for a future traffic light, if necessary. According to Darren Coffey, planning director, a TIA found that a right and left turn lane would be necessary at the entrance of the property on Rt. 15.

"This is the exact opposite of last time," Charles Allbaugh (Rivanna) said of the proposal. "It is so much better. There is never going to be any plan that comes before us that is perfect. This is exactly the type of thing that we are looking for. We, as a county, need to keep looking forward."

Gubernatorial candidate in Goochland

On Sunday afternoon, May 17, Virginia gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe addressed a gathering of the Goochland Democratic Committee and more than 70 other Democrats from surrounding counties. The event, organized by the Goochland Democratic Committee, was part of the committee's outreach efforts to ensure all voters have a chance to meet the candidates before the June 9 statewide primary.

Terry McAuliffe outlined his more than 20 years of accomplishments in creating jobs and focused on the 17 years of work that he has done in creating the "Democratic brand" as viable in states like Virginia.

During the course of the hour-long event held at Goochland's Java Jodi's, candidate McAuliffe focused on job creation, health care, home ownership, education, alternative energy and transportation.

"We need a governor that will focus on jobs creation - that is our single most important focus," McAuliffe stated. "I don't believe in raising taxes in a down-economy. Our focus has to be on generating economic activity and on job creation."

McAuliffe spent most of the hour-long event covering specific plans on increasing teacher pay,



Virginia gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe speaks with residents at a recent gathering of the Goochland Democratic Committee. Submitted by Goochland Democratic Committee

education, creating alternative energy sources from agricultural waste, college affordability and transportation. McAuliffe called for a mandatory renewable energy standard for Virginia and for proceeding with plans for high-speed rail.

The McAuliffe event was

the second in a series of events planned by The Goochland Democratic Committee in this year's election cycle. The committee has already hosted James Towey, primary candidate for the Democratic nomination in Virginia's 56th District and Brian Moran, Democratic primary can-

didate for governor. Towey is attempting to unseat the incumbent delegate, Bill Janis, a campaign that was strongly supported by Terry McAuliffe saying that the Democratic Party needed to pick up six seats in the House of Delegates in this year's election.

The Byrd named Silver Medalist

The Byrd - Celebrating the Byrd Theatre was recently named 2009 Silver Medalist for best non-fiction book in the Mid-Atlantic Region by the Independent Publisher Book Awards organizers. This New York-based competition attracted 4,090 entries from throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The Byrd was released in October, 2008 by the Byrd Theater Foundation and Dementi Milestone Publishing as a publication to support the restoration of the Byrd. It was written by George Bruner, and illustrated by Jayne Hushen.

According to Bertie Selvey, Byrd Theater Foundation representative, the book "has done much to raise awareness of the distinguished history of the Byrd, and is contributing nicely to our fundraising efforts."

"The Byrd means so much to Richmonders," Dementi added. "We were delighted that this book has received such recognition."

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