

green IDEAS

BUILDING HERITAGE PARK



green scene

What: Healthy Homes Fair and Tour.

When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

Where: Nottingham Park in Avon.

Cost: Free.

Information: Fair showcases the ideas, products and services that are shaping the green revolution. Shuttles from Nottingham Park will take festival-goers to tour two sustainable homes in Edwards, including the Jim Guida home in Heritage Park.

Vail Valley builder Jim Guida's contribution to the green-building movement is Heritage Park; a 12-acre site in Homestead in Edwards.
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Local builder Jim Guida constructing sustainable homes in Edwards

Editor's note: This is the third in a series of articles highlighting the 2009 Healthy Homes Fair and Tour, happening Saturday at Nottingham Park in Avon. The event is a fundraiser for the Eagle Valley Alliance and the Vail Symposium. For more information, visit www.vail-symposium.org or www.eaglevalleyalliance.org.

By Cassie Pence
DAILY CORRESPONDENT

Local builder Jim Guida believes it's the building industry that will take the lead role in making a greener planet.

After all, buildings consume 40 percent of the total energy used in both the U.S. and Europe, according to the American Council for Energy Efficient Economy. So there's plenty of room for improvement.

Guida's contribution to the green-building movement is Heritage Park, a 12-acre site in Homestead in Edwards that will have 24 homes when complete. It's positioned as move-up housing, and homes are approximately 3,000 square feet with 1,800 square feet of unfinished basement.

Considered the Vail Valley's first green neighborhood, so far every home exceeds the standards of Eco-Build and Built Green, two organizations that set criteria to help stimulate environmental awareness through the use of energy-efficient technology, materials and techniques in new home construction.

All of the homes also are Energy Star rated, which means the houses meet strict guidelines for energy efficiency set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Heritage Park has positioned Guida Construction as a real trendsetter in sustainable building. When the project was approved in 2004, green building was just taking shape among industry professionals. Big changes were on the horizon, and Guida had already pledged to build a responsible development.

"One of the great things about Heritage Park is that because we committed to doing more than just another development, more than just another cluster of homes, it gave me the opportunity to continue to improve and up the ante on what we were doing as the green-building industry advanced," Guida said.

Nighttime cooling

Heritage Park started out encompassing Guida's philosophy on green building — real energy-efficient homes built to last. But as sustainable materials and building science evolved, so did Heritage Park, and Guida began to incorporate innovative heating and cooling systems, water-conservation fixtures, drought-tolerant plants, recycled materials and renewable energy.

All of the homes go through rigorous tests for energy performance. Some systems make it, and some are taken out of the Heritage Park plan.

On Saturday, people can experience the pinnacle of Heritage Park during a tour of its 14th home on Lot 8. The house is one of two homes featured in this year's Healthy Homes Fair and Tour.

The fair, taking place at Nottingham Park in Avon, showcases the ideas, products and services that are shaping the green revolution. The tour showcases some of these green ideas in action. Several industry professionals will be on-hand during the tour to answer questions.

"This 14th house represents a giant step forward in relevance to green building," Guida said. "It's the home that raises the bar for Heritage Park."

This is the first Heritage Park home that uses renewable energy.

The solar system will supply 100 percent of all hot water and some of the home's space heating through radiant-heated floors. House 14 has replaced air conditioning with a nighttime cooling system. Still controlled by a thermostat, the system pulls air in from the outside to cool the home during hot summer days.

People will see water-conservation measures, such as low-flush toilets and a water monitor for the landscape system. The device detects when it has rained one-quarter inch and shuts off the irrigation system.

Green is here to stay

Although less flashy, tour-goers will also see how an energy-efficient building envelope operates. The building envelope — which is how tightly the home is sealed from air and its insulation — is what Guida considers the "holy grail" of green building.

"In most homes, 30 to 50 percent of energy loss is due to air infiltration. The building envelope is numero uno. Miss this, and you miss everything about being green," Guida said.

Taking a lead role in an ever-changing industry such as green building, Guida said he is constantly educating himself and his team.

As a company, Guida Construction attends at least one national green-building seminar per year. Guida reads a lot and takes an active role locally that includes bringing green-building education to the Vail area, such as the Houses that Work series from the Energy and Environmental Building Association.

For the Heritage Park project, Guida analyzes every system in the home for sustainability, cost and how much it pays back in energy savings. Some systems, such as solar water heating, are better than others. But overall, Guida has learned that not only is green hot, but it's here to stay and it really works.

"I'm in it because the whole green-building concept is real, and I know it's the right way to be building," Guida said.

learn more

Call Jim Guida
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Cassie Pence is a freelance writer based in Vail. She volunteers for the Eagle Valley Alliance for Sustainability and the Healthy Homes Fair and Tour.