



Winds Of Change

Victory Homes brings affordable high-performance living to California's high desert. **By Jim Hackler**

The high desert city of Victorville, Calif., sits only 80 miles northeast of Los Angeles, but strong winds, little rain, and temperatures ranging from freezing to 110 F make it a very different place to live from L.A. But the weather matters little to the families moving to the area because of the more affordable housing prices available in this part of Southern California.

"We find many of our buyers leaving the inner cities and more expensive suburbs for reasonably priced homes here, where it's a fairly short commute to the Inland Empire," says Austin Richey, vice president of construction for Victory Homes in Arcadia, Calif., which has been building homes in Southern California for 30 years.

One of the secrets to Victory's long-term success, according to Richey: being on the cutting edge. It's why the company chose to be one of the first to join the California Green Builder Program, which is administered by the Sacramento-based Building Industry Institute. "It wasn't even on anyone's radar three years ago," says Richey. "Just as we were one of the first builders to certify our homes Energy Star so many years ago, we worked hard to make the Green Builder program work for our entry-level homes. We wanted to give our buyers more than just energy efficiency."

While Richey estimates it costs \$5,000 to \$10,000 more per house to meet the additional requirements of the green program, he also believes it's been an important selling point to home buyers. "It's really to our advantage to market a home that uses less energy and water than our competitors," he says. "It matters to our customers who are buying their first

□ Stone and gravel with low-maintenance plants appropriate to the arid conditions of California's high desert are featured at Victory Homes.



Company
Victory Homes II
Headquarters
Arcadia, Calif.
Founded
1977
Leadership
Todd Leibl, CEO; Austin Richey (pictured), vice president, construction
Employees
25
Closings
65 (2007)
Website
www.victoryhomesinc.com

DEFINING MOMENT

Making the switch to green



□ Victory Homes was the first builder to partner with the Victor Valley Water District to offer a Water Smart front yard package that includes a satellite-controlled irrigation control box. The system gets the latest local weather forecasts so it can accurately predict how much to water the landscape.



home because it will let them keep more money in their pocket.” (Victory’s homes sell for prices in the high \$200s.)

Other groups benefiting from the California Green Builder program are the jurisdictions trying to comply with the California Integrated Waste Management Act and its stringent regulations. (It requires cities and counties to divert 50 percent of their total waste stream.) Participants in the California Green Builder program must recycle at least 50 percent of their construction waste, which is one of the most aggressive basic requirements of any green building initiative in the country.

That has been one of the biggest challenges for Victory Homes. Unlike firms in California’s coastal areas, Victorville and its local trash haulers are new to recycling. “We essentially introduced the concept to the market, and we continually work with



□ A contractor caulks around a duct vent. All of Victory Homes go through a series of third-party inspections and diagnostic testing to meet ComfortWise protocols.

Jim Hacker

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TALKING TRASH

Effective waste management is a big part of California's Green Builder program. Here are tips from waste management experts Packer Industries (www.packer2000.com) on how to establish a recycling program at your company.

- › Establish who is in charge. This is usually the construction manager or general contractor, who will need to provide dumpsters and waste services for the project and enforce recycling rules with all contractors.
- › Write a "request for proposal" for waste hauling and recycling to help you choose a hauler. Ask what happens to the materials after they are collected. (Ask for specifics on location of markets and what your recyclables get made into.)
- › Create a construction waste management plan that includes goals, accountability, and education.
- › Determine where to place dumpsters on site, how many and what type are needed, and when.
- › Identify the materials that can be recycled from the waste stream.
- › Include waste management in all your training programs.
- › Provide a one-page handout to crews as a reminder of waste separation requirements.
- › Monitor the process by checking containers to ensure that the proper materials are going into each one.
- › Ask haulers to provide you with monthly, if not more frequent, records of how much material is being removed, by weight and volume, and at what cost. Have them include contamination reports from haulers. Communicate regularly with the haulers to find out how your crews are doing.
- › Do a final analysis that tells you whether you saved money or spent extra in disposal costs by recycling.

VICTORY'S PRODUCT PICKS

- › **Milgard Styleline low-E windows:** Richey says they help brighten up the rooms of Victory's homes without the heat buildup of the standard double-paned windows that the company has used in the past.
- › **CertainTeed and Guardian insulation:** Victory Homes uses R-38 in ceilings, which helps keep its homes cool during a Victorville summer, when temperatures can exceed 105 F.
- › **Hunter Industries drip irrigation systems:** The slow watering approach of buried drip irrigation lines uses less water and keeps the landscape healthier by directing moisture to plant roots.



our contractors to make sure they understand how to sort the construction materials," says Richey. "We also try to use components that are prefabricated in a controlled offsite environment as much as possible. Minimizing waste before it even gets to our site makes everyone's job easier."

But Victory pays attention to jobsite recycling, too. "Not everything can be avoided, so we have a backup plan in the form of presorting recyclable waste at the jobsite, just like so many of us do at home with our three different colored trash cans," Richey says.

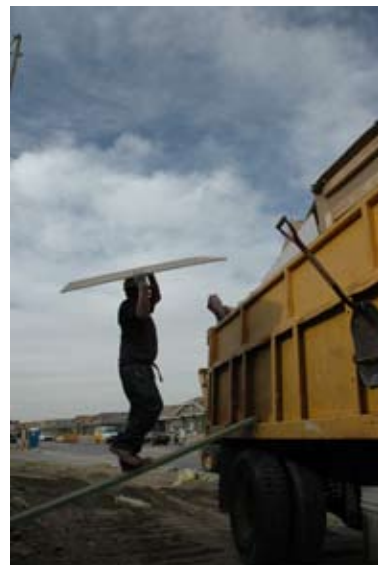
Another big change is a shift to landscaping that features not water-loving sod and turf, but attractive plants appropriate for the area's high desert climate.

"Before there were any landscape requirements, we teamed up with the Victor Valley Water District to pilot drought-tolerant landscape designs with satellite irrigation controllers that were appealing to buyers, yet saved large amounts of water," says Richey. "The idea was so successful, that today those standards are mandatory for all homes built in Victorville." He estimates the change in landscaping and installation of low-flow fixtures saves 20,000 gallons of water annually in each home.

While Victory Homes has only been building green for a few years, the company won the 2006 Golden Nugget Grand Award in the California Green Builder Residential Project category, beating builders from 14 Western states.

The judges selected Victory Homes' entry because the builder met the unique challenge of constructing entry-level homes in a market that is just beginning to understand what it means to be green.

"Winning the Gold Nugget was an unexpected tribute above and beyond our expectations," Richey says. **GB**



- Sorting construction waste in separate piles is the secret to successful recycling. Victory Homes worked with Victorville to help launch the city's new program.

Jim Hacker