

League of California Cities

Analysis, Commentary and Updates on Legislative and Policy Issues that Affect California Cities

PRIORITY FOCUS



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HOME

CONTENTS

Editor's Note

Senate Budget
Committee Holds First
Hearing on State-
Local Fiscal
Relationship

New PPIC Survey
Finds Voters Inclined
to Reject Prop. 98 and
Support Prop. 99

Schwarzenegger
Administration
Developing Land Use
Strategies for
Greenhouse Gas
Reductions

AB 2176 Update: Bill
Passes Out of First
Assembly Committee

Legislative Action
Days Scheduled for
April 16-17 in
Sacramento

Leverage Prop. 42
Gasoline Sales Tax for
Road Repairs

Building Green in Your
Community is
Achievable with
California Green
Builder

Find a Bill,
Legislators, Leg
Committee, or Ask
League Leg Staff

Building Green in Your Community is Achievable with California Green Builder

Sustainable Cities Feature: Guest Article by Robert Rivinius

California Green Builder (CGB) is the state's most successful green building program. Easy to understand with quantifiable results, CGB is helping California's cities and homebuilders lead the way on resource conservation.

CGB is officially recognized as an environmentally-friendly green building design program by the California Public Utilities Commission and the California Energy Commission. The program's rigorous standards require increased energy efficiency, reduced construction waste, water conservation, and protection of our timber resources.

Specifically, CGB requires that builders:

- Save at least 20,000 gallons of water per year over a typical production home;
- Exceed California's Title 24 energy efficiency standards by 15 to 20 percent;
- Divert at least 50 percent of construction waste from landfills; and
- Use engineered wood products from a certified sustainable source.

Homebuilders, working with engineers, scientists and conservation specialists, created CGB as a program that generates quantifiable resource conservation, while being more practical than other, more complicated programs. To date, 1,759 CGB certified homes have been completed, with more than 5,614 scheduled to be built. That is far more than any other green building program in California.

The program caught on quickly among California homebuilders. They like CGB because it gives them a competitive edge, enhances sales, and in some cases they also get significant benefits from jurisdictions in entitlement, permitting, plan-checking, and inspections. Many homebuilders are participating in the program and many more are expected to join in the coming months because local governments are making CGB the preferred green building program.

In fact, over the last year local and regional entities have adopted the voluntary California Green Builder program and have included incentives to increase builder participation. The Imperial Irrigation District, the City of Riverside, San Bernardino County and, most recently, the Western Riverside Council of Governments have chosen CGB as the preferred program. These jurisdictions are offering expedited plan checks, guaranteed timelines, priority inspections, or financial incentives to make CGB even more cost-effective.

CGB utilizes a flexible performance-based approach that allows a homebuilder to utilize the most cost-effective means to meet program standards. As a result, the average CGB home costs a few thousand dollars more to build than a traditional production home. Much of that cost difference can be eliminated with local government and utility incentives and rebates to consumers.

Green building is important to California's future. With continued adoption of the voluntary program by local governments and its straight-forward and flexible compliance, CGB is an excellent program for local governments, builders, and most importantly, California homebuyers.

For more information about California Green Builder visit www.cagreenbuilder.com.

Robert Rivinius is president & CEO of the California Building Industry Association which represents 7,000 companies engaged in the homebuilding business.

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