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GREEN BUILDING

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Compact Design

Catch a Wave

By:

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SMALL WONDER: McClellan's house packs a lot of efficiencies into the main home's small footprint (seen in the background), while a detached garage and bonus room above adds relatively cheap usable space.

Photo Credit: David Burghart

Builder J.P. McClellan is learning how to surf, and the lessons he's taking from Florida's Atlantic coast offer a direct analogy to green building. "One thing I've learned watching and surfing the waves is that you can't get too far ahead of them or too far behind them," he says. "We're seeing a new wave of building, and we may be a little in front of it right now."

That's a comfortable spot for McClellan, at least out of the water, as he leverages a personal interest in sustainable building borne out of the first energy crisis in the early 1970s and honed through his building career since. In 2006, he launched his own company, J.P. McClellan Inc. Artisan/Builder, to further refine sustainable building concepts. "Building smarter and more sustainably has always made sense to me," he says.

His latest home, a 1,252-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath jewel box in Amelia Park on Amelia Island, Fla., clearly fits that bill and reminds the industry that green isn't just about energy efficiency or low-VOC finishes. "We started this company with a focus solely on homes that are 2,500 square feet or less," he says. "The smaller, the better."

Size wasn't the only thing that mattered, though, as McClellan made sure to include more mainstream tenets of green building. Thanks to tankless water heating, passive solar daylighting, insulated windows, and high-performance cooling and dehumidification equipment, among other specs, the house is the first in its decade-old, 420-unit traditional neighborhood community to be qualified under the federal Energy Star program. "I've recognized the opportunity [for green building] for eight years and have been gradually integrating these - concepts," says McClellan, who oversaw construction on more than 200 homes in Amelia Park prior to starting Artisan/Builder. "The key is to make it make sense to the home buyer."

To that end, McClellan is changing the marketing focus of green building from efficiency to effectiveness. "If you just look at efficiencies, you can't necessarily get back your investment," he says. "But the most effective use of resources is more than an economic equation and is easier to sell to the market."



SPACE EFFICIENT: The 1,252-square-foot plan wastes no space but also doesn't skimp on style or convenience. The U-shaped kitchen just inside the back door offers an ample island and eating bar.

Photo Credit: David Burghart

To illustrate his point, McClellan refers to healthier homes that address buyer sensitivities beyond the cost of the house. "It's hard to put a price tag on a home that promotes better health," he says, a sales point he also uses to tie his homes to the health of the overall environment. "It's your relationship to your home, to the environment, and to the community that makes it green and sustainable."

McClellan is counting on those concepts resonating with enough buyers to make his financial model work, one that calls for him to build four presold homes this year as the Florida housing market struggles to recover. And yet, he's uncompromising. The green features of his latest project, priced in the upper \$300s, are a baseline, not an upgrade or option. His next house, nearing completion, will include a rainwater collection and irrigation system. "If you don't want green, I won't build your house."—R.B.

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