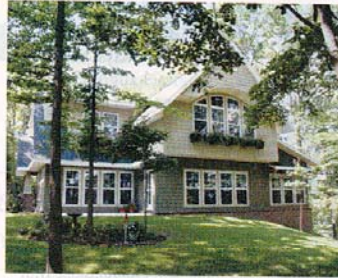


REAL ESTATE

The Color Of Sales

THE HOUSING SLUMP notwithstanding, sellers of ecofriendly homes are seeing green. "Our local real-estate market is in the tank, but we're hiring people left and right to try to keep up with demand," says David Stitt, an ecofriendly builder in Arkansas. At 340 on the Park, a new green high-rise overlooking Lake Michigan in Chicago, 337 of the building's 343 units are sold—despite prices from \$350,000 to more than \$2 million. "We're selling expensive real estate in the city of Chicago,



and it can't feel Birkenstock-ish," says Kerry Dickson, of the developer Related Midwest. In December, Elaine Cottey and her husband will move into their unit. They like the ecologically correct bamboo floors, the bike room and the 11,000-gallon tank that collects storm water used to irrigate the landscaping. All the right stuff, and it still

GREEN HOUSE: Ecologically correct home in Arkansas

looks luxe. "It's a win-win situation," says Cottey.

Today's buyers want to save money on energy and breathe the air without smelly chemicals in the paint. There's

also the "cool" factor. "There is a uniqueness to a home that has a countertop made out of recycled glass, or flooring made out of salvaged wood, and they know where that wood comes from," says Jennifer Hattam, green-living editor for the Sierra Club.

The greenest homes embrace native plants, use little water (think low-flow faucets and dual-flush toilets that provide more water for solid

waste), require minimal energy and improve indoor air quality. Floors made from rapid-growth eucalyptus trees and countertops made from recycled paper are good for nature—and are "feel-good features," says Grand Rapids, Mich., builder Arn McIntyre.

There are even green real-estate agencies, such as Green Key Real Estate in San Francisco and KJM Real Estate in Beverly Hills, Calif. "This really isn't the house of the future. This is the house of today," says Albuquerque, N.M., home builder Steve Hale. And in this nervous economy, says KJM's Brian Bradley, "by incorporating green features into your home, you can increase its value and make it stand out in the marketplace."

—KAREN SPRINGEN

THE WEB