

City of Austin

Green Builder Program

The City of Austin, Texas is home to one of the most progressive efficiency programs in the world. The Green Builder program pushes the envelope of energy efficiency program designs to encompass parallel emphases on water efficiency, waste management, and use of "green" building materials. Using a clever market-pull mechanism to foster an integrated resource management approach to new residential construction, Austin has not only begun to transform its own "shelter industry" but has been internationally acclaimed as a model for sustainable development.

Green Builder's roots were in the Energy Star program, an early home energy rating program that was based on a point system (see Profile #11). The better the efficiency of the home, the better its rating, thus the more saleable the home. As community awareness in Energy Star grew the building community began to respond by "going green," recognizing that efficiency had become a feature of home buyers' decisions in Austin. When the program was expanded beyond energy efficiency, it "took off like a rocket!" Austin had tapped a vein of public interest and Green Builder quickly became prominent in Austin, the United States, and around the world.

As with other voluntary programs, effectively marketing the program to home buyers and to the shelter industry has been key to its success. The City has employed a range of strategies from renting a prominent billboard to hosting an acclaimed conference on green building. Collaborating with Habitat for Humanity and the American Institute for Learning (AIL) further raised the program's profile. Along with the City, AIL was instrumental in developing a green building, job training program for at-risk youths. Then the greatest program leap occurred when a production home developer developed a large residential community in line with the program. Another developer further validated the program by building affordable housing to a Three Star rating, proving that green building can be socially responsible while affordable.

Perhaps Austin's most important contribution has been its detailed assessment of building materials. To rate homes based on their materials, program staff not only had to get its arms around a vast and growing body of information related to green building, but also had to translate these values to the building community in Austin. The Sustainable Building Sourcebook represents a major effort in substantiating green building, providing builders, architects, developers, and others with comprehensive information on building materials and practices that can foster a path to sustainability. This arduous and pioneering work not only benefits Austin, but serves as a solid foundation for green building efforts around the world.

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**THE CITY OF AUSTIN
Green Builder Program**

Sector: Residential new construction

Measures: Menu of sustainable building practices promoting an integrated resource management approach, covering energy, water, building materials, solid waste

Mechanism: Low-cost, market-pull program based on a One to Four Star rating system to raise awareness of and promote green building practices

History: Program design introduced in 1992; honored at Earth Summit in 1992; pilot in 1993; significant participation increase in 1994

CUMULATIVE PROGRAM DATA

Electricity savings: 365 MWh
 Gas savings: 3,585 CCF
 Participation: 279 homes
 Nominal program cost: \$920,181
 Levelized program cost: \$813,975

The Results Center produced 126 profiles of the most successful energy efficiency and renewable energy programs in the United States and around the world in the early and mid 1990s. With the support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ted Flanigan directed a research team at Colorado-based IRT Environment to produce and distribute these exceptional examples. Thanks to strong demand for solid case studies, The Results Center was supported by dozens of major utilities and energy associations worldwide. Today, The Results Center is managed again by Ted Flanigan, now at California-based EcoMotion Incorporated, a firm focused on strategic consulting, information dissemination, program design, outreach services, and aggressive implementation. To nominate highly successful programs, contact: The Results Center, c/o EcoMotion, 15375 Barranca Parkway, F-104, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 450-7155, or TFlanigan@EcoMotion.us