

GREENCRAFT, INC.



NORTH CAROLINA CUSTOM BUILDER MAINTAINS ITS COMMITMENT TO GREEN BUILDING

by Amy McNeil

ASHEVILLE-BASED GREENCRAFT, INC. specializes in green spec-built homes, although the company also handles custom and renovation projects. Most of the company's work is within the city limits of Asheville, NC, where the company goes to extra lengths to develop inside the city limits, rather than add to suburban sprawl.

James Bound and his wife LeAnn started Greencraft, Inc. to focus on environmentally sound building practices. James is president of Greencraft, Inc., and LeAnn is vice president and treasurer. When

Greencraft completed its initial spec homes, the Bounds and their team utilized local resources to educate themselves about green building. "We used resources in Asheville, like the Western North Carolina Green Building Council, which oversees the North Carolina Healthy Built home program," explains James. "And with each house, we learned a little bit more and improved our craft."

Through the Green Building Council's Directory, and the Asheville Home Builders Association, James met various subcontractors and built

strong relationships with them. Since its inception in 2003, Greencraft has completed seven homes and four renovations. “We usually work on only a couple of projects at a time,” states James. “We have a tight subcontracting crew that has enabled us to develop a very efficient process, increasing quality and significantly decreasing build time.”

Various of Greencraft’s projects showcase the skill and creativity that go into each creation. Patience and problem-solving factored into completion of the 36 Ritchie Street house. James had plans for a 1,650-square-foot house on a small in-fill lot in downtown Asheville. While the City of Asheville requires 50 feet of frontage, the proposed lot only had 45 feet of frontage, as well as an existing home encroaching 10 feet onto the lot on one side. “It was a tight neighborhood, and we worked with the city to get zoning variances for setbacks,” James says. “The Zoning Department not only granted lot-size variances, but also reduced the required setbacks,” says



Left: James and LeAnn Bound.

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James Bound, President

James. “Some of the plot records are so old in the city neighborhoods that property lines are unclear, and when surveyed with modern equipment, can be quite a bit different from where folks have believed them to be. The city is pushing for in-fill development, so they granted us the necessary variances which allowed us to make this lot work.”

The City of Asheville strongly encourages development within the city limits in order to reduce suburban sprawl, thus reducing the number of commuters, which reduces both

congestion and pollution. Greencraft embraces these goals, even if it might take the company up to three months to get the city’s approval for a project.

The 36 Ritchie Street house is a three-bed, two-bath house that is both Energy Star and North Carolina Healthy Built-certified. “One of the challenges in building in Asheville is that it’s a mixed, humid climate,” shares James. “It’s cold and dry in the winter, hot and humid in the summer, so we are very careful about moisture barriers throughout the home, and pay extra

attention to air-sealing.” Toward that end, Greencraft insulated 36 Ritchie Street above what the building code requires. The home has R-50 ceilings and R-21 exterior walls. The company sealed and conditioned the crawl space, and also installed dual-flush toilets. An added bonus, they will enroll the buyer in North Carolina Green Power for a year, which supports renewable energy in the state, as well as the Western North Carolina Green Building Council for a year.

Greencraft conscientiously chooses

the type of home based on the lot and the community. "We make each house fit the style and the size of the neighborhood," says James. "We're not going to build something that doesn't fit well into its surrounding landscape." All of the homes, regardless of the style, share green building features. "We want all of our houses to be environmentally friendly and provide significant savings to the owner," says James.

When Greencraft built a larger residence at 84 Village Point Lane, the company again built an Energy Star-certified, and North Carolina Healthy Built-certified home. The 3,200-square-foot residence features low-E windows that provide 90 percent of daytime lighting needs. Greencraft also used Icynene insulation. "Icynene is a sprayed foam that insulates and air-seals very

well," explains James. "We encapsulated the home and the roof deck so the heating bills will be significantly less than a house with conventional insulation. So far it seems to be providing an approximate 50 percent reduction in energy bills," James adds. Greencraft also installed Energy Star appliances, fluorescent lighting, and an Energy Recovery Ventilator, which provides conditioned fresh air to compensate for the air-tightness of the house. Additionally, Greencraft used native, drought-resistant, or edible plants for landscaping. As a result, the home's backyard is a National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat.

One of Greencraft's challenges in exclusive green home construction and renovation is finding the right buyers. "Since we do mostly spec homes,

we have to make sure there's a market for what we're doing," James says. "We committed to green building from the beginning, but it takes time for buyers to learn about it." Greencraft has found success due to customer referrals, as well as referrals from local realtors who understand the societal and economic benefits of green building. Greencraft also began using real estate companies that specialize in, and only list, green construction. "Working with the Asheville-based company EcoHouse Realty has been instrumental in marketing our homes because they understand the different aspects of green building, which can be overwhelming for a buyer," explains James. By having an in-depth knowledge of green building, the realtors at EcoHouse are better able to sell Greencraft's homes.

Maintaining their commitment to green building, Greencraft has refined their techniques, and becomes more knowledgeable with each project, which is helping Greencraft develop a reputation in the market for creative, eco-friendly construction. The company has enjoyed sales increases of around 100 percent in the last two years, and is expecting revenues to reach the \$2 million mark this year, all while helping to improve the environment in which they live and work. GBQ

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