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Real Estate

THE HOME FRONT

Corpus hopes growth results from auction

A 45-minute real estate auction last month by one of Padre Island's largest landowners brought \$10.6 million and attracted 350 to 500 people who watched the sale.

Now Corpus Christi officials hope the sale will jump-start development and will revive the island's slowing real estate market.

"We need outside interest," said Corpus Christi City Councilman Mark Scott, whose district includes a portion of Padre Island. "The hope is that people will begin to build so we can develop some energy. The market is not in a recession, but it's flat. We want our community to be growing."

Landowner Paul Schexnaider on March 10 auctioned 225 feet of gulf-front property, 56 commercial lots and multi- and single-family lots.

Gerald Bowie of the Auction Way, a LaGrange, Ga.-based firm, said 21 buyers purchased the 48 parcels offered in the auction.

The single-family lots sold for \$50,000 to \$90,000. Two gulf-front properties sold for \$2 million each, Bowie said.

Not up for auction was Schexnaider's acreage immediately adjacent to Packery Channel, considered his most valuable land.

— Jennifer Hiller

Green homes rule, say owners in survey

A recent survey reports that owners of energy-efficient homes, for the most part, love their homes and are eager to recommend buying "green" to others. Preliminary survey results released last month show 85 percent of green-home buyers are happier with their new digs than their previous homes.

Word-of-mouth is still effective in the green building market, which represented \$1.8 billion and 3 percent of all U.S. homes built last year, with 28 percent of green-home owners reporting they first heard about green building from someone they know.

The survey found that most owners of green homes are affluent, well-educated, in their mid-40s, married and likely to be from the Southern or Western states. More single women buy green homes than do single men.

More than 60 percent of the survey's respondents reported lower operating and maintenance costs as the main reasons for buying a green home.

The complete survey, which was conducted by McGraw Hill Construction with sponsorship from the National Association of Home Builders, will be available in early summer at www.analyticsstore.construction.com.

— Rachel Stone



PHOTOS BY J. MICHAEL SHORT/SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS-NEWS

Energy-saving products and inspections ensure Energy Star homes meet guidelines. The EPA says Energy Star homes like this one being built by Armadillo Homes in Stonecreek are at least 15 percent more efficient than average homes.



In addition to extra insulation, high-performance windows, tight construction and ducts, efficient heating and cooling equipment, Energy Star homes put in Energy Star-rated appliances, such as the Whirlpool appliances in this new home. If all homes could reduce energy usage by 10 percent, Americans would save \$20 billion annually in utility costs.



Many new-home builders in San Antonio — this house was built by Armadillo Homes in Stonecreek on the West Side — participate in the EPA's Energy Star program.

All about ENERGY

Besides cutting utility costs, Energy Star homes help the environment

By JENNIFER HILLER
EXPRESS-NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

Here's an unpleasant thought: Your house is leaking. Several times every hour, that cool breeze your air conditioner just pumped into the home oozes outside.

It escapes through the fireplace, the ductwork, the holes where wiring and pipe go through the walls and around windows and doors.

The result of all of this indoor-outdoor air exchange: your stunning summer-time electric bills.

To try to address high utility bills, dozens of San Antonio new-home builders now participate in Energy Star, an energy-efficiency program of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Energy Star started in 1992 as a voluntary way to reduce the greenhouse gases emitted at power plants.

The program is most familiar to people shopping for home appliances. Many energy-efficient refrigerators, washers and dryers, air conditioners and even light bulbs have Energy Star ratings.

But the program recently caught on with home builders in a big way.

More than 60 San Antonio builders have signed up with the Energy Star program.

And in Texas, 37 percent of the new homes built in 2006 — 60,829 of 162,480 new homes — were Energy Star-certified, according to the EPA.

If you're shopping for a new home, should you care about Energy Star?

The benefits

Energy Star homes are at least 15 percent more energy-efficient than average homes and many are 20 percent to 30 percent more efficient, according to the EPA.

That means they include a variety of features that help lower energy bills. And because they use less electricity, power plants don't have to generate as much, which over time can reduce air



Armadillo Homes uses radiant barrier roof decking and well-insulated ductwork in the Energy Star-rated homes its building in Stonecreek.

ENERGY STAR BUILDERS

More than 60 builders in San Antonio participate in Energy Star. Here are the top eight and the number of Energy Star-qualified homes they've built in San Antonio:

- KB Home: 2,385
- Pulte Homes: 1,639
- Medallion Homes: 1,534
- D.R. Horton: 648
- Armadillo Construction Co. Ltd.: 486
- Sitterle Homes: 203
- Standard Pacific Homes: 180
- Wilshire Homes of Texas: 120

Source: Environmental Protection Agency

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For a complete list of Energy Star builders in San Antonio.

pollution. Such features include extra insulation in the attic and walls, high-performance windows, tight construction and ducts, efficient heating and cooling equipment, and Energy Star-approved appliances or light bulbs.

"A lot of people think you just need more insulation," said Jack Morris of Plum Creek Builders, which builds to Energy Star's highest guidelines. "You can have tons of insulation, and it doesn't matter if the house isn't tight."

So how much more does an Energy

See ENERGY STAR/4G