

Writing Sample - Not for Publication

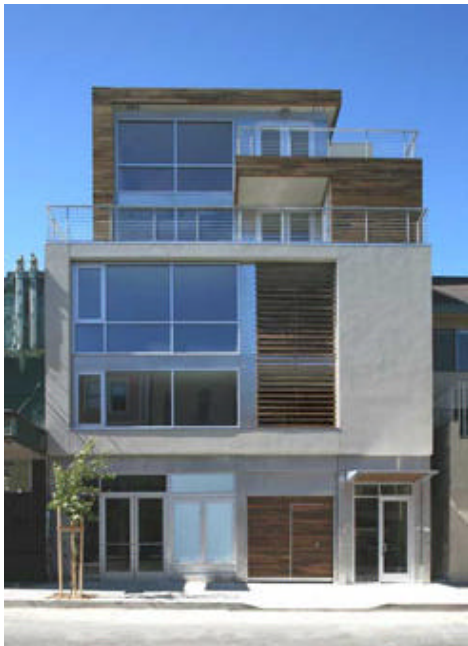
This piece was written for a trade magazine serving real estate agents

If You Can Show Clients Why it's Worth Their Time and Money to Go Green, Then You Might be an *Ecobroker*

By Terri Daniel

Consumer interest in environmentally-friendly homes has never been higher, with homeowners across the country willing to pay a premium for green features. The trend is so pervasive that it's spawned a new breed of real estate agents called EcoBrokers.

Since 2003, a company called EcoBroker International (www.ecobroker.com) has been providing training and bestowing an official designation for agents who want to expand their reach in the green real estate market. The program is part of the Association of Energy and Environmental Real Estate Professionals (AEEREP), and the coveted EcoBroker certification can be a boon for business.



In the Bay Area, demand for green homes far outweighs the supply, and the responsibility for implementing green systems and practices often falls to homebuyers who plan to renovate. This creates a rare opportunity for brokers to move into this up-and-coming specialty area while doing their part to promote environmentally-conscious practices. The accreditation can be rather daunting, but it comes with considerable benefits. The knowledge gleaned from the 18-hour EcoBroker training not only enables brokers to answer questions with authority about environmentally-sound systems and practices, but also provides them access to a wide range of resources and referrals.

“Brokers are in a unique position to educate their clients about indoor air quality, resource conservation, sustainability and energy efficiency,” explains James Rogers, an EcoBroker with Green Key Real Estate in San Francisco. “This most often happens when buyers plan to renovate the home they are purchasing. We’re in a unique position to give advice and get our clients in touch with architects, builders and product vendors who can make this happen.”

Builders, realtors and environmental advocates are developing new and better ways to alert brokers to homes with green features. A Bay Area group called Build It Green now offers a rating system that evaluates new homes in five categories: energy efficiency, resource conservation, indoor air quality, water conservation and community. If the home scores more than 50 points it earns the right to bear the *Green Point Rated* label. Some of the highest-rated developments in the Bay Area are *Avignon* by Centex Homes, with a green point rating of 104, and *Freeda Court* by Habitat for Humanity in Hayward, which scored a 95.

Making these homes available to buyers is becoming easier every day, in part due to the efforts of an East Bay organization called *Building Green*, which is working to make “green features” a searchable category on the MLS. This will not only lead buyers to green homes, it will also help determine what percentage of homebuyers are specifically looking for such homes.

“As green development becomes more prevalent, green building will be a significant driving force in distinguishing properties,” explains real estate attorney Todd J. Wenzel, partner in the San Francisco law firm of Ropers, Majeski, Kohn & Bentley. “If one home is ‘more green’ than another, and if the two homes are otherwise comparable, consumers will choose the green homes, and will pay more for them. As new neighborhoods are being developed

with "smart" development plans that include development-wide recyclable water and irrigation systems, public transport, solar panels and other joint eco-friendly attributes, this will generate renewed fervor to buy homes in these developments.”