

Building industry pros to tout green at expo in S.F.

- Judy Richter, Special to The Chronicle
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More than 6,000 building industry professionals and 250 exhibitors are expected to attend the West Coast Green Residential Building Conference + Expo on Thursday through Saturday at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in San Francisco.

The show will be open to the public on Saturday, designated as Homeowner Day, starting with registration at 8 a.m.

The day will continue with a talk by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at 10 a.m. Kennedy is senior attorney of the Natural Resources Defense Council, chief prosecuting attorney for the Hudson Riverkeeper and president of Waterkeeper Alliance.

The exhibit hall will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It will showcase resource-efficient materials along with green and healthy building products from roofing to flooring and much in between.

Visitors also will have a choice of 32 talks and seminars on topics ranging from landscaping and remodeling to solar energy and the green economy.

The show is produced by Christi Graham, founder and president of Healthy Home Plans, which offers plans for sustainable and healthy houses.

Graham also co-founded and directed the Green Resource Center in Berkeley.

West Coast Green has its roots in the Green Materials Showcase, a trade show that Graham started in the 1990s.

"Even in San Francisco, a city at the heart of green innovation, it's still challenging to locate and purchase greener alternatives," Graham wrote in an e-mail.

"We are helping meet this need by connecting those who are seeking green building materials with the supply chain," she wrote.

"I believe that all building in the future will be green," Graham said during a telephone interview.

Graham's Healthy Home Plans Web site (www.healthyhomeplans.com) lists green criteria. They include nontoxic building materials, energy efficiency and environmentally friendly products, among others.

Therefore, green means "building in a way that is healthy, smart and sustainable for both humans and the planet," Graham wrote in her e-mail.

"Because green is emerging," she said in the interview, "houses that are built green are more valuable." She cited a Boulder, Colo., study finding that houses with green features are 15 percent more valuable than conventional houses.

Moreover, the cost of building green is dropping. A few years ago, being green cost 10 to 15 percent more. Today that premium "is 1 to 2 percent, if any," she said.

"Energy has become a very hot topic. It's always been the unsexy topic," but global warming, natural disasters and former Vice President Al Gore's film, "An Inconvenient Truth," have brought it into the forefront.

Thus energy "is one of the aspects (of being green) that is growing fastest," Graham said.

"The whole green building movement started with natural building," which had a funky image, she said. Green buildings today are cleaner-looking and more modern.

Moreover, "green actually means good business." Builders and home buyers also are beginning to understand the importance of health and quality of life, she said.

What: Homeowner Day at the West Coast Green Residential Building Conference + Expo

When: Saturday -- registration 8 a.m.; talk by Robert Kennedy Jr. 10 a.m.; exhibit hall open 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; talks and seminars 11 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m.

Where: Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, 99 Grove St., San Francisco

Tickets: \$30 at the door, \$20 advance at www.westcoastgreen.com

Information: (800) 724-4880 or www.westcoastgreen.com

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