



EarthCraft House

In 2006, the EarthCraft House (ECH) program experienced its most successful and productive year in its seven-year history. Some of the highlights include changes in the structure of the program, as well as major increases in the impact the program is having throughout the Southeast.

During the year, the program requirements were changed from one to two inspections per house. This change was implemented to improve the quality of the overall structure by adding an initial inspection prior to the drywall installation and providing more assistance to EarthCraft House builders during the building process. The change has increased the chances of a home passing at the final stage because the inspectors have an opportunity to see and make note of potential issues with the building envelope and systems at an early stage, when correction is easier and less costly.

As the EarthCraft House program has grown, it has had a significant impact on the number of high performance homes on the market. In 2006, more than 775 homes were certified, bringing the total number of EarthCraft House-certified homes to more than 3,500. In addition, 356 units of multifamily housing were certified in a wide range of prices, from affordable and workforce housing to luxury condos. Regional pilot efforts with EarthCraft House continued in coastal Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and a statewide rollout schedule was released by the Virginia Sustainable Building Network and the Home Builders Association of Virginia. The Virginia effort has already certified 125 units.

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The program's membership has increased by 30 percent in the past year to almost 200 members and continues to receive favorable media attention. Throughout 2006, the program was featured in publications as varied as *Builder Magazine*, *Atlanta Home Improvement Magazine*, *20 South*, *Home Energy Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. A print and broadcast advertising program, made possible by the EarthCraft House Premiere Builders and Grand Partner sponsors, has significantly increased awareness of the program.

Education for EarthCraft House builders remains an important component of the program. During the year, the HBA held nine ECH classes and trained 233 individuals. The classes included EarthCraft House Building for builders, EarthCraft House Renovation for remodelers and Selling the EarthCraft House for sales agents.

The HBA and EHC program partner Southface Energy Institute are proud of the advances that the ECH program has made in 2006 and recognize that these successes would not be possible without the generous support of the EarthCraft House sponsors and more than 180 home builders who are committed to building energy-efficient, healthy and sustainable homes. 🏠