

WASHINGTON

Specialized Homes

Bob Niemann founded Specialized Homes 12 years ago with the premise to build sustainable homes back when Green building concepts were still relatively new. "When we told people that we wanted to build Green homes with less impact on the Earth, we usually received blank looks," says Niemann. However, since that time Specialized Homes has built hundreds of sustainable and energy-efficient homes, while establishing itself as a leader in the Northwest for Green and innovative designs. In fact, when the Master Builders Association of King & Snohomish Counties' Built Green program was launched in 2000, Specialized Homes found that it was already meeting the program's highest level for Green performance.

In addition to Built Green, Specialized Homes incorporates construction methods that meet Energy Star guidelines as well as the company's own standard called Healthy Habitat, a trademark initiative that combines environmentally responsive prac-

Bob Niemann,
founder of
Specialized
Homes.



This Issaquah, Wash., spec home built by Specialized Homes and designed by Mithun Architects is the first solar home for Puget Sound Energy in King County.

tics with aesthetics and healthy living spaces. "The Healthy Habitat approach includes indoor air quality, energy efficiency and resource efficiency," says Niemann. "For every home, we find out how we can make it pencil to market and meet these criteria."

Besides building with sustainable and Green practices, Specialized Homes incorporates architecture styles that are crafted to match the natural surroundings of the home, fostering a connection with the land. "Our company really focuses on combin-

ing refined architectural designs with conservation of the natural land, advancing energy efficiency and sustainability. We balance and merge these components with every home we build," says Niemann.

Specialized Homes recently built a new solar home in Issaquah, Wash., that is the first for Puget Sound Energy in King County. The 4,339-square-foot home features a 2,500-kw-hour photovoltaic (PV) system that generates renewable energy. In addition, the PV system incorporates net metering—useful when more electricity is generated by solar than the home uses in a given period—that routes excess electricity back to the utility grid in exchange for credit utilized at other high-use times.

"We are anticipating that the PV system will ultimately generate 20 to 25 percent of the annual electric needs of the home," says Niemann. "These types of projects are getting closer to the mainstream," adds Niemann. "Builders need to educate the consumer to generate more demand, and more incentives need to be created to make these features more economically practical." ☺

WASHINGTON NEWS

The Olympia City Council recently reduced school-impact fees by 60 percent for downtown projects. The fees were lowered following a survey by the Thurston County Regional Planning Council, which determined children were less likely to live in the downtown area.

hitting 4.4 percent in April. The number was down slightly from March's 4.6 percent rate. In a statement, Gov. Chris Gregoire said that the announcement was further proof that Washington's economy is one of the strongest and fastest-growing in the nation.

The 10,000th Built Green home

The number of building permits recorded in King County for the first quarter of 2007—4,912—represents a 116 percent jump from the previous year ...

A labor agreement was recently settled between the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters (PNWRCC) and the Associated Contractors of Washington (AGC) following over a month of negotiations. The PNWRCC was asking for increases to wages, benefits, pensions and the carpenters' training fund. The final settlement included an additional \$7.20 per hour for journeyman carpenters.

The City of Issaquah is considering a Zero Energy Demonstration Initiative, which would include the design and construction of 10 attached homes built to an ultrahigh Green standard. The goal is to demonstrate the feasibility and demand for technical and practical Green designs and also to advance Green and energy-efficient development in the region.

The Blume Co. of Seattle recently purchased a 2.1-acre parcel close to the South Lake Union area for \$22 million. The property, which is zoned for a maximum 450,000 square feet of mixed-use development, is located approximately 1.5 blocks west of Interstate 5 between Mercer and Republican streets, and Yale and Pontius avenues.

Washington's unemployment rate fell to the lowest reading in 31 years,

was recently completed at Greenbridge, a mixed-income, master-planned community in White Center, King County. In 2006, 3,107 certified Built Green residential projects were constructed.

Groundbreaking recently occurred for the 78-acre Kendall Yards project north of downtown Spokane that will feature 2,600 new residences including townhomes, condominiums and apartments in addition to 1 million square feet of commercial space. Local developer Marshall Chesrown's project will ultimately consist of a residential urban district with historical features, plazas and walking trails. In order to help pay for the estimated \$43 million needed for the project's infrastructure improvements, the city council created a tax increment financing district that is expected to raise \$25 million of the total cost.

The number of building permits recorded in King County for the first quarter of 2007—4,912—represents a 116 percent jump from the previous year, same time. The median resale price for a home there increased 10.1 percent over the same period, reaching \$440,000. ☺

WASHINGTON BY THE NUMBERS

MEDIAN RESALE PRICES FOR THE FIVE LARGEST COUNTIES

	MEDIAN RESALE PRICE	ONE-YEAR % CHANGE
King	\$440,000	1.1
Pierce	\$282,000	8.5
Snohomish	\$370,000	13.8
Spokane	\$181,900	7.1
Clark	\$269,400	3.8

Median resale prices for all of Washington's five largest counties increased in the first quarter compared with last year.

SOURCE: WASHINGTON CENTER FOR REAL ESTATE RESEARCH AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIV.