

Building a LEED's Green Home in Ocean Reef

An interview with Leslie & Richard Chanin

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I HAVE HEARD OF A LEED'S CERTIFIED BUILDING. WHAT DOES LEED'S STAND FOR?

Many of us are aware that new office buildings and other commercial and government buildings are now being built to LEED's standards but few of us think of building a house to these standards. LEED's is the acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and signifies that a structure is built to strict design and building codes that protect the environment and conserve energy use.

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BUILD A LEED'S HOME IN OCEAN REEF?

My daughter who keeps her classic gaff rigged sailboat at Ocean Reef and is very environmentally conscious, (she is Executive Director of Global Growers, a not-for-profit that develops and operates urban farms and farmers markets in Atlanta), insisted that if I was going to build a new house that it should be a "green house" and built to the highest LEED's standards. She sent me the information on building a LEED's certified home and the requirements necessary to have a qualified "rater" become involved with the project at the design phase.

WHAT TYPE OF CERTIFICATIONS DOES LEED OFFER FOR HOMES?

There are four levels of certification based on a rating system scored on environmental sustainability and energy conservation and efficiency. They award four levels of certification: certified, silver, gold, and platinum being the highest.

I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE BUILDING TO THE PLATINUM DESIGNATION. CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT THAT MEANS?

In designing the new house, Lesley and I wanted to incorporate classical keys architecture and resort features into a LEED's certified built home. When we asked our realtor to find out who the architect was that designed a house on Andros Road, we discovered that he is one of the few LEED's certified home architects in Florida. He told us that no one has built a LEED's certified home on the Reef, but since Ocean Reef is already a community that uses electric vehicles, (golf carts), reverse osmosis water for irrigation, operates its own waste management and recycling systems, that we would be able to start out with a significant number of points that theoretically would allow us to achieve the highest grade home certification from LEED's.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GOALS THAT GO INTO THE SCORING PROCESS TO ACHIEVE PLATINUM CERTIFICATION?

1. Landscaping: use of native plants and plants that require minimal irrigation such as Zoysia grasses instead of St. Augustine.
2. Water reuse: use of gutters and collection of rainwater for irrigation.
3. Waste management: recycling on the construction site and sustainable grounds.
4. Materials: use of heat resistant glass in windows; use of highest rated insulation in roof and walls.
5. Energy and air management: use of the highest rated Energy Star appliances and equipment and highest Seer air conditioning systems.
6. Alternative energy systems: wind turbines; solar energy
7. Pest management: non toxic chemical use

WHAT IS THE ADDITIONAL COSTS TO BUILD A LEED'S CERTIFIED HOME?

Building to a high LEED's standard can add twenty percent to the building costs though it is anticipated that it will reduce monthly utility bills by at least thirty percent. Even though it would take many years to amortize the initial cost of the investment, it should add considerable resale value to the house just as hurricane resistant windows and reinforced roofs have become the building standard of houses one wants to purchase today.

Our goal is to build the best possible house we can build and at the same time help the environment rather than to build the most cost efficient house. Maybe, this will set a new building standard for future builds in Ocean Reef since we are now the sole community still being allowed to build in an area that is surrounded by a national park and state and county protected and regulated lands and waters. We hope to have a LEED's plaque on our entry post at the completion of the project!

WHERE CAN ONE OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BUILDING A "GREEN" OR LEED'S CERTIFIED HOME?

You can go to the following web site: www.usgbc.org/cert-guide/homes

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