



A Grant, a Goal, and a Group of People Passionate About Building Better

Clark Public Utilities, forward-thinking builders, verifiers and county officials worked together to raise the bar for green building in Clark County, Washington. They formed the Green Building Council and, through education and outreach, got the National Green Building Standard (NGBS) adopted as a voluntary code in their community.

A Crash on Wall Street Leads to an Opportunity on Main Street

After the Great Recession in 2008, Clark County received a grant from the American Revitalization and Reinvestment Act to help jump-start its economy. In return, the county had to make a good faith effort to get a green building code adopted on a voluntary level. They brought on Mike Selig as a Weatherization Project Manager to make that happen.

“At the time we had three commissioners, two of them Republicans, one of them a Democrat. I knew I couldn’t market the adoption of a green building code based on sea lions in the Arctic and carbon and all that,” Mike said.

Instead, he addressed the concerns of builders and homeowners in the area. He found a study from RMLSTM showing that green-certified homes sold faster and for more money. He highlighted that better indoor air quality would resonate with young families who want to avoid harmful pollutants. He talked about increasing load capacity and decreasing demand on city resources.

One of Mike’s most valuable moves was reaching out to builders and key building players in the community.

COLLABORATORS

Clark County
clark.wa.gov

Clark Public Utilities
clarkpublicutilities.com

Building Industry
Association of Clark
County’s Green
Building Council
biaofclarkcounty.org
vancouvergreenbuilding.com

Urban NW Homes
urbannw.com

LOCATION

Clark County, Washington
Ridgefield, Washington
Vancouver, Washington

ACHIEVEMENT

Adoption of the National Green Building Standard on a voluntary basis

ACTIVE RATERS IN TERRITORY

9

HOMES CERTIFIED ABOVE CODE (SINCE 2013)

2,917

AVERAGE HOME SIZE

2,435 sq. ft.

AVERAGE HERS® SCORE

57

“Bring as many different players as you can to the table: builders, Raters/verifiers, your local home builders association, city and county officials, utilities and their supporting contractors, REALTORS®, appraisers, bankers. Determine how each player can effect change and help to have more above-code homes constructed.”

DUWAYNE DUNHAM,
ENERGY SERVICES
SUPERVISOR, CLARK
PUBLIC UTILITIES

Finding Community Champions

Urban NW Homes got behind the adoption of the NGBS right away. Troy Johns and Jerud Martin started their building company in a shaky building market, but with an eye on the future. They knew green homes were quality homes, and as members of the Building Industry Association (BIA) of Clark County, they were able to get the organization to support Mike’s mission.

At the same time, DuWayne Dunham, Energy Services Supervisor at Clark Public Utilities, was looking for ways to encourage builders to incorporate energy efficiency into their homes. His department helped bring ENERGY STAR® to the area, and he and a coworker even trained as verifiers so nothing would prevent builders from participating.

“It’s less expensive, and easier, to make a home more energy efficient during construction than to go back years later and try to retrofit energy-saving measures,” DuWayne explained.

Together, they formed the BIA’s Green Building Council and started promoting the NGBS.

Education and Entertainment to Build Awareness

Since many great features of energy-efficient building are hidden once a house is complete, the BIA hosted a series of events that allowed attendees to interact with the efficiency features of the homes. These events helped educate local municipalities, fellow builders, key political players and the public.

“Our goal was to connect our community with the great advancements that are happening in building science. Having people inside the homes before the walls were closed up and providing access to experts really created a unique opportunity to maybe dispel some myths that people have about these homes,” said Stephanie Frisch, PR Director of the BIA.

Clark County also created the “Planet Clark” demonstration trailer in 2011 to take to events and spark customer interest in the latest building technology. They’ve found that once builders start building above code, and customers start living in above-code homes, they don’t want to go back.

How to Get a Code Adopted in Your Area

Everyone involved agrees that it takes a group effort to create change in the community. Mike attributes his success at Clark County to studying the current climate and asking himself, “How can I market this most effectively and talk their language, not try to change anybody’s mind?”

DuWayne of Clark Public Utilities suggests getting a variety of supporters. “Work to bring in builders, but also don’t leave the customers behind, because they’re the ones who really drive builders’ decisions,” he said.

From a builder’s point of view, the benefits of building to a stringent green code also include a sense of pride and customer satisfaction. “We want to further the message that there’s a way to build and then there’s a more responsible way to build, a better way to build,” Jerud of Urban NW Homes said.

Stephanie at the BIA added, “The Green Building Council would really be open to partnering with any other organizations that have that same vision and mission.”

You can contact the BIA’s Green Building Council at **360.694.0933** or **stephanie@biaofclarkcounty.org** and visit **BetterBuiltNW.com** to see how you can collaborate with innovative professionals in your area.