

**THE CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION'S
POSITION ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

February 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	2
BASIS FOR DEVELOPING THE CHBA’S POSITION ON THE ENVIRONMENT	3
FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE HOUSING	4
Attributes of Environmentally Responsible Housing.....	4
Physical Elements Relevant to Environmentally Sensitive Housing.....	4
Relevant Materials, Techniques and Operating Functions of the Housing Environment	5
Relevant Parties in the Development of Environmentally Responsible Housing	5
Available Strategies for Influencing the Development of Environmentally Responsible Housing	6
CHBA APPROACHES AND ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE HOUSING.....	6
General Approaches and Measures.....	6
Actions Applicable to the Dwelling Unit	7
Actions that Apply to Land/Community Development.....	8
Other Applicable Actions	8

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) launched a major and wide-ranging initiative to renew and invigorate the Association. In 2004, a Task Force was established to guide this initiative. It produced a report titled "CHBA Vision for the Future" that identified broad themes to be addressed by the Association and its members. One of its important themes was 'building credibility and trust'.

In 2005, the CHBA engaged the Conference Board of Canada to work on a key goal of the CHBA's future vision: to earn the public's respect and trust. The Board produced a report that focused on the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a strategy to achieve this goal. The CHBA established a CSR Task Force to review the Conference Board's report. On the basis of this report, the Task Force drafted a statement referred to as the CHBA Member Builder's Statement of Business Values and Commitments. This Statement was revised, approved by the CHBA's Board of Directors in October 2005 and by the CHBA's members at the Annual Meeting of Members in February 2006.

The CHBA Member Builder's Statement of Business Values and Commitments contains five stated values and six commitments¹. One of the commitments is titled Environmental Commitment which includes the following statements:

- "We acknowledge that the development of new communities, and the construction and renovation of homes, has a range of impacts on the environment, both today and in the future. We work with governments and others to develop environmentally responsible housing solutions.
- We are committed to developing communities, and to building and renovating homes, in an environmentally responsible manner through utilizing appropriate technologies, materials, building practices and techniques.
- We pursue continuous improvement and innovation in our processes, practices and products, in order to meet our environmental responsibilities."

The Statement also contains the following commitment: "We have criteria for selecting suppliers of goods and services which reflect our commitment to social, environmental and human rights principles and values."²

As part of its efforts to implement the new vision for the Association, the CHBA wishes to consolidate its position on the environment. Doing so will provide clarity and guidance to the CHBA at all levels and to its members on positions and actions they can take with respect to environmental issues in housing. This document states that position. A related document titled

¹ The CHBA Member Builder's Statement of Business Values and Commitments outlines values under the following headings: integrity, professionalism, responsibility, community and leadership. It outlines commitments under the following headings: our responsibility to customers, community involvement and investment, environmental commitment, business practices and performance, human resource development and workplace health and safety.

² This statement is contained in the section, "Business Practices and Performance" of the CHBA Member Builder's Statement of Business Values and Commitments.

“Guidelines for New Home Builder, Renovator and Developer Members of the Canadian Home Builders’ Association to Contribute to the Development of Environmentally Responsible Housing” presents guidelines on actions by new home builders, renovators and developers in support of developing environmentally sensitive housing that are based on the rationale contained in this report.

BACKGROUND

The CHBA has supported the construction of environmentally responsible housing and has stated its position in papers, policy advice, advice on programs, speeches by its leaders, advice to its members and other modes for over 15 years. One early example is the CHBA’s major position paper titled “The Canadian Housing Industry and the Environment” published in 1991. The core position of the CHBA at that time is expressed on page 1 of the report:

“Environmental sustainability – integrating an environmentally sensitive approach into a business framework – is becoming a common goal for all sectors of Canadian industry, governments and the public. The housing industry recognizes the need for action in this area and is committed to playing a substantial role.

- Housing has a far-reaching impact on the environment, from land development to wastes from the construction process to the depletion of natural resources by the operation of houses.
- Houses are major consumers of energy; houses built now lock in energy consumption patterns for decades to come.
- The environmental imperative for the housing industry is to provide Canadians with homes that have the least adverse impact on the natural environment.
- At the forefront of the industry, builders can play a significant part in the initiatives aimed at addressing environmental issues; they can also make an important contribution as message carriers and agents for change.
- CHBA has taken a significant role in meeting many public objectives through initiatives such as ACT, R-2000 and social housing policies. The Association’s concern over environmental impacts of housing is consistent with these efforts.”

This 1991 position paper contains a wide range of policy proposals and guidelines including the following:

- Energy conservation measures applicable to dwelling units. These measures include measures applicable to building envelopes, heating, ventilating and cooling systems, energy-efficient windows, appliances and lighting, renewal energy and water conservation.
- Environmental measures applicable to larger scale elements of the housing environment, including land use measures affecting the preservation of wetlands and hazardous lands, and community planning measures dealing with intensification, transportation and sewage.
- Other measures dealing with solid waste management, toxic materials, material reuse and recycling.

The 1991 paper is referenced to illustrate some important ideas:

- CHBA has a long tradition of advocating measures to encourage environmentally responsible housing.

- CHBA’s current statement on the environment as expressed in the CHBA Member Builder’s Statement of Business Values and Commitments is consistent with its long-standing tradition.

BASIS FOR DEVELOPING THE CHBA’S POSITION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The CHBA’s position on the environment is based on five factors:

- Compatibility with the environmental commitments contained in the CHBA Member Builder’s Statement of Business Values and Commitments.
- A belief in the environmental and business benefits of environmentally sensitive housing. The environmental benefits are self-evident. Business benefits include the following:
 - Potential efficiency gains from business practices that reduce energy and resource consumption.
 - Competitive advantage for those businesses that adopt and implement environmentally sensitive business and construction practices. This advantage accrues for several reasons including the following:
 - Increasing consumer expectations for products that are environmentally responsible.
 - Superior corporate reputation.
 - Superior ability to recruit and retain employees because of growing interest by employees in working for employers who care about the environment which in turn results in greater company productivity.
- An understanding of the key participants, approaches and factors involved in the development of environmentally responsible housing. The factors are numerous and complex, and are discussed below.
- An understanding of underlying and long-term environmental issues, such that the CHBA’s position has ongoing applicability.
- A strategic application of the CHBA’s resources to ensure the most beneficial environmental impacts on housing. This factor is relevant because the CHBA’s resources are finite and its influence on the factors affecting the development of environmentally responsible housing varies. The CHBA will apply the following criteria to focus its efforts so they will be most effective:
 - Significance of the environmental issue or opportunity, as indicated by measures such as environmental consequences and societal impact.
 - Probability of achieving positive results from its efforts with respect to environmentally responsible housing. This requires understanding the accelerators of, and barriers to, positive progress (e.g., technical feasibility, market acceptability, affordability, regulatory compliance, risk and cost), and the ability of the CHBA or its members to control or overcome the barriers.

In summary, consideration of these factors can identify which environmental issues or topics the CHBA will address, to whom it will direct its efforts and the methods it will deploy.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE HOUSING

The CHBA's position and actions with respect to the environment are based on an understanding of what environmentally responsible housing is and the factors that affect its development. This understanding is presented below:

Attributes of Environmentally Responsible Housing

The CHBA recognizes that environmentally responsible housing is characterized in terms of the attributes listed below.

- Energy efficiency: This refers to measures that reduce energy consumption.
- Resource efficiency: This includes minimizing the use of materials, reuse of waste produced in the construction process, use of products made of recycled materials, water conservation and durable construction (which reduces demand for products and materials).
- Reduced environmental impacts:
 - At the scale of the dwelling units and buildings, this includes minimizing waste produced in the construction process, reducing the use and disposal of material that have harmful emissions, recycling waste materials into useful products, minimizing waste water, selecting materials that have no or minimum emissions of harmful substances, and using techniques that reduce the consumption of fuels that emit greenhouse gases. These can include utilization of energy efficient construction and/or the use of alternate forms of energy such as solar, wind and geothermal energy.
 - At the land and community development scale, it includes community design, strategic investments in infrastructure, which includes efficient transportation, increased densities and techniques for reducing the sewage load, preservation of natural habitats and redevelopment of brownfield sites.
- Healthier indoor environments: This includes good indoor air and water quality.
- Improved economic viability.
- Improved affordability for customers: This includes measures that result in housing that can be produced in a cost-effective manner and priced so that households can afford them.

Physical Elements Relevant to Environmentally Sensitive Housing

The CHBA recognizes that the development of environmentally responsible housing must address the physical elements of environmentally sensitive housing. Identifying these elements clarifies the physical scope of environmentally responsible housing:

- Dwelling units and their components: This includes focusing on the building envelope, heating, cooling and ventilation systems, windows and doors, appliances and fixtures.
- Entire housing projects.

- Land/community development: This includes wetlands, other sensitive lands and natural heritage, hazardous lands, transportation modes and networks, and waste and sewage treatment techniques.

Relevant Materials, Techniques and Operating Functions of the Housing Environment

The CHBA recognizes that the development of environmentally responsible housing is affected by the following:

- Building materials and products
- Construction techniques
- Construction equipment

It also includes the following corporate operating functions:

- Company's facilities that it selects or designs (e.g., the energy efficiency of its offices)
- The equipment and techniques it uses in its operations (e.g., the energy efficiency of its vehicles)
- Company administrative and communications practices (e.g. electronic communications that can affect paper use) and company recycling practices

Relevant Parties in the Development of Environmentally Responsible Housing

The CHBA recognizes that the development of environmentally responsible housing depends on the actions of a wide range of companies and organizations, including the following:

- CHBA at its three levels
- New home builders and renovators
- Trade contractors
- Developers
- Manufacturers and suppliers
- Government:
 - At the federal level, the most relevant organizations are Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) and the Institute for Research in Construction (IRC) of the National Research Council.
 - At the provincial level, it can include departments responsible for energy, environment, housing policy, codes and standards, and provincial utilities.
 - At the municipal level, it can include a wide range of departments, including planning and development, by-law enforcement, public works and waste management. Relevant participants depend on the issue(s) being addressed.
- Associations with mandates that relate to housing and the environment
- Financial institutions
- Community at large

Available Strategies for Influencing the Development of Environmentally Responsible Housing

The CHBA recognizes that a number of strategies are available to influence the development of environmentally responsible housing, including the following:

- Policies
- Programs
- Regulations
- Voluntary, market-driven measures
- Education and training
- Research and development, and related functions, e.g., demonstration projects, and technology transfer and diffusion efforts as part of a strategy to support innovation

Alternate approaches available to the Association, including the following:

- Unilateral versus joint actions/cooperative/partnership approaches
- Advocacy approaches versus self-implementation

These strategies can be targeted to influence any or all of the attributes and physical elements of environmentally responsible housing, and the construction functions, products, and participants involved in the development of environmentally responsible housing.

CHBA APPROACHES AND ACTIONS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE HOUSING

The following actions reflect the understandings outlined above:

General Approaches and Measures

- Because solutions to many environmental issues depend on authorities and capabilities beyond those of the CHBA, the Association favours tackling them in cooperative working relationships with other organizations in formal or informal partnerships. Arrangements between the CHBA and other groups will vary depending on the environmental issue addressed because different issues require different interventions. The CHBA will continue to work with groups most relevant to specific issues on a case-by-case basis. Key partnering organizations for the CHBA at the national level will continue to be CMHC, NRCan and IRC. This approach represents a continuation of a long tradition with the CHBA.
- When appropriate, the CHBA will continue to advocate market-oriented voluntary approaches rather than regulatory approaches to encourage the development of environmentally responsible housing.
- The CHBA will continue to support innovation by promoting the following:
 - Government-funded research and development of environmentally responsible housing techniques and products. This includes demonstration projects to highlight new techniques and technologies, technology development initiatives similar to the Advanced

Houses Program in the 1990s and the new Net Zero Healthy Housing Initiative by CMHC, and technology transfer efforts to diffuse those techniques and technologies that are successful and cost-effective.

- Efforts to overcome barriers to the development of environmentally new techniques and products, particularly risk and high cost.
- The CHBA will continue to encourage education and training to help its members implement the most effective techniques and technologies for building environmentally responsible housing. The CHBA will continue to support a house-as-a-system approach for incorporating environmental features in houses.
- The CHBA will continue to promote environmentally responsible housing to consumers.
- The CHBA will continue to communicate the achievements of the housing industry, its members and the Association at all levels in the development of environmentally responsible housing.

Actions Applicable to the Dwelling Unit

- The CHBA will continue to support the updating of the R-2000 Initiative. This support will include the following actions:
 - Support for continued government investment in the R-2000 Initiative because of its positive impact on the development of environmentally responsible housing.
 - Promotion of the R-2000 Initiative to the CHBA builder members.
 - Support for the use of the R-2000 Initiative as a vehicle for developing new environmentally responsible technologies through ongoing research and development and transferring them to the housing industry.
 - Promotion of the R-2000 Initiative to consumers.
 - Sponsorship of the EnviroHome initiative as a marketing vehicle to showcase new environmentally responsible technologies and promote R-2000.
- The CHBA will continue to support the development of other environmentally responsible housing programs. This includes EnerGuide for New Houses Program, the Built Green Program, the Energy Star Program and the Environmental Choice Program as it applies to housing. The CHBA will also continue to encourage their new home builder and renovator members to participate in and/or promote these programs to their customers.
- The CHBA will continue to update its Builders' Manual by working with manufacturers, suppliers and researchers to provide builders with information about state-of-the-art housing technologies, systems and processes, including environmentally responsible technologies.
- The CHBA will continue to support the construction of environmentally responsible housing by recognizing builders' achievements through the Association's awards programs.
- The CHBA will continue to support the cost-effective commercialization of geothermal, wind and solar energy to reduce the production of greenhouse gases.
- The CHBA will continue to support efforts to reduce construction waste by contributing to the development of information on reducing material use and the reuse of waste materials.

- In view of the significant opportunities for energy savings in existing housing, the CHBA will continue to support a wide range of measures to upgrade the energy efficiency of the existing stock.

Actions that Apply to Land/Community Development

- The CHBA will continue to support community designs and strategic infrastructure investments that are beneficial to the environment, including the following:
 - Energy efficient transportation systems.
 - Land intensification.
 - Innovative techniques for reducing storm and sanitary sewer loads.
 - Cost-effective community energy systems.
 - Cost-effective community and project plans that reduce demand for water.
- The CHBA will continue to support the preservation of natural habitats, including wetlands and sensitive lands by participating in forums at the local, provincial and national levels.
- The CHBA will continue to support the development of brownfield sites by advocating legislation and regulations that take into account human safety, developer costs and liability and the benefits of such development, and by promoting the development of new remediation techniques.

Other Applicable Actions

- The CHBA will continue to support efforts to reduce construction waste by encouraging ongoing development of waste recycling techniques and participating in municipal waste management programs. This includes programs to manage materials that are toxic or otherwise harmful to the environment.
- The CHBA will continue to support initiatives by manufacturers to reduce construction waste. This includes efforts to reduce packaging.
- The CHBA will continue to support dissemination of information on the selection of building materials that are healthy and safe.