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CITY REPORT

Affordable building classes get green light

By Jeanette Almada

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A green-building workshop, to be held at the Chicago Center for Green Technology this month, will help affordable developers bring green homes to their neighborhoods.

The workshop is offered by the **Chicago Community Loan Fund**, the non-profit lender that provides financing for projects in redeveloping neighborhoods.

The workshop will cover ways to create energy-efficient, environmentally friendly affordable housing while reviewing some challenges to affordable green designs.

Grant programs and other resources for green building also will be discussed, said Mark Fick, the fund's senior loan program officer.

Developers increasingly equate sustainability with affordability, a notion that is more justified as green building technology evolves, said Jeff Grossberg, executive director of SkySite Property LLC, a Chicago-based green project management company.

High-performing, energy-efficient systems in green buildings drive operating expenses down, Grossberg said, and as global warming drives costs up, there is more incentive for builders to go green.

Grossberg generally serves commercial real estate clients who see green technology more as a way to meet market demand than as an amenity.

Robust demand for green technology among commercial markets is spilling over into the residential sector, Grossberg said.

"Green technology is no longer a luxury. If you have a 100-unit green building and a 150-unit building with outdated technology, the owner of the green building will have lower operating expenses and so greater net operating income," Grossberg said.

This, along with the technology's evolution, makes continuing education a must for green builders.

That also explains the growth in training programs.

For example, the Mechanical Contractor Association of Chicago has begun offering conferences for its members -- mechanical engineers who install heating and cooling systems.

"We think that energy efficiency is the high point of a green building and encourage our members and their clients to embrace green building technology," said Daniel Bulley, MCA's vice president who works with the U.S. Green Building Council.

In addition to organizing the workshop, the community loan fund has formed network of affordable green developers, architects, contractors, lawyers and financiers in the Chicago region. "We meet regularly with a goal of making it easier to incorporate sustainable design elements into affordable housing," Fick says.

The group, he says, has been working since the beginning of the year to identify and address the roadblocks to sustainability in affordable building.

The workshop will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 23, at the Center for Green Technology, 445 N. Sacramento Blvd. Fees range from \$60 per person to \$125 for three people from the same organization.

Call the loan fund at 312-252-0440.

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