



BUILDING & REMODELING WITH FSC

For Residential Projects



Making it Happen: Homeowners

Strategies for Making it Happen as a Homeowner

Homeowners are in charge of a number of decisions that are made regarding their newly constructed home or remodeling project. Essentially, it is the homeowner that is in the driver's seat because they are financing the project. If the homeowner is knowledgeable and motivated they can make some very responsible demands on the home building and remodeling industries.

Buying New Home Construction

Unfortunately, when buying a new home in a development many of the features, finishes, and designs have been pre-determined. Therefore, if you are interested in making green homes with FSC products available in a future neighborhood you may have to meet with the builders to explain the importance of their use of green building techniques and finishes, including FSC wood products. It would be best to meet with a builder early on in the process as many of the material selections decisions for production homes take place months before construction begins. A great place to discuss green building with homebuilders is in the show homes of current developments.

If you are buying a new home you may have limited green options unless you are willing to wait because both green building and FSC-certified wood products are market-based mechanisms that need to be driven by the demand, meaning you. Due to the newness of both of these efforts many homebuilders around the country are still becoming familiar with the terms green building, LEED for Homes, and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood. However one thing is for sure: homebuilders nationwide are very interested in the views of a potential buyer and in this tighter housing market you may be successful in swaying a builder to the greener side. Do your homework to gain a baseline of green building information, including what FSC means, and head out on a Sunday to speak with homebuilders at their open houses. It will never happen unless you ask!

Home Building & Remodeling

As a homeowner embarking on a home building or remodeling project you have the power to select a design, the quality of craftsmanship, and

Cut out for suppliers:



Help Me Protect:

- Our Air
- Our Water
- Our Global Climate
- Our Natural Forests
- Our Biodiversity
- Our Wildlife

worldwide by buying Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood products.

Each purchase sends a message to the market that our community is part of the solution.

To inquire about bringing FSC-certified products to our market visit:

www.findfsc.org



the materials that meet your values and project goals. The first step in sourcing FSC-certified products for your project is to outline specific areas in your project where you would like to use wood.

Once you have developed a list of potential applications for wood use, you will need to research the availability of those products in your market. Three product characteristics that are usually assessed during research are pricing, availability, and quality. Due to FSC emergence as a new market, some of these characteristics may appear to be askew. The following provides some guidance to understand potential discrepancies:

Pricing – Not all FSC-certified products are more expensive based solely on their certification, and many factors can go into the additional expense. To learn how much FSC products cost in your market simply research the products on your list via the internet, local suppliers and manufacturers. As you learn more about specific products and their cost, note that on your FSC products list. Present this list to your hired professional as early on as possible, ideally during the initial meeting or prior to their bid. If your research and FSC product list, with prices, is presented prior to the professionals bid then they can actually work that price into their bid. This will give you a true estimate of the cost of the wood on your project.



Homebuilders nationwide are very interested in the views of a potential buyer.

Photo Credit: Warm Springs Forest Products

Availability – Since the demand is growing for FSC-certified products in all parts of North America, more products are becoming available in local markets. However, local suppliers and retailers still need to hear from customers that FSC products are in demand. Local retailers and suppliers are cautious about bringing new products into their market unless they are confident that customers will buy them. While you are researching the different FSC products inquire about the lead time that might be needed for specific FSC products. This information is important to communicate with your hired professional because the last thing that you want to do is to be forced to choose non-certified products in order to meet your project schedule.



A substantial amount of FSC-certified products are available at the manufacturing level and over the past three years the distribution and retail chains have been getting more involved to ensure products are available locally. Sometimes, however, you may have to make the decision to order FSC products from out of your region due to the fact that it is not available locally but by making your requests to local suppliers and manufacturers you have provided them with important information about where the market is shifting.

Quality – This is the hardest of the three characteristics to assess, due to the fact that poor quality products can become defective months or years after the project is complete. De-laminating plywood, twisting lumber, and cupped flooring are a few common complaints and can be present in certified and non-certified wood products. Ask FSC products suppliers and manufacturers about the longevity of their products, talk to others who have installed it, and read case studies.

Pricing, availability, and quality are all important factors when buying products and the recent emergence of ‘green’ products has been a fourth factor. If you do your research, ask questions, and communicate your needs clearly to your hired professional, your new home or remodeling project will meet your values and project goals. Good luck and have fun!!



Pricing, availability, and quality are all important factors when buying products.

Photo Credit: Jenny Horton



Case Study: The Horton's Green Dream Rises from the Maryland Eastern Shore

“In the end, we needed to bring products in from other parts of the country in an effort to spur the market in this area to purchase and stock FSC products. Surprisingly, the cost wasn't all that much higher than local wood, even after transportation costs.”

Jenny Horton
Homeowner

Jenny and Tom Horton purchased their property with the vision of deconstructing the existing buildings and rebuilding a home that had cutting edge green building features while still giving them a Maine cottage feel. The goal was to use the existing foundation and footprint to build a new home that could meet their modern living standards and preserve the trees surrounding the old structures.

Initially the Horton's thought that local big box retailers might carry FSC-certified building materials, as they had been reading for years about the commitments these retailers had made to purchasing FSC. However, due to the supply scale of the large big-box retailers in the US, they could not always provide FSC-certified products. And even though they had the benefit of speaking with some high level officials at one of the retail chains, delivery time was not going to fit within the constraints of their project.



The internet provided... a great deal of resources for finding FSC products

Photo Credit: Jenny Horton

As it became clear that the established big box retailers were not going to be able to fill the Horton's order, they began to look elsewhere for FSC-certified products. Jenny Horton remembers their initial research for FSC-certified products, “The internet provided us with a great deal of resources for finding FSC products, even though some of them were not immediately available in our market. In the end, we needed to bring products in from other parts of the country in an effort to spur the market in this area to purchase and stock FSC products. Surprisingly, the cost wasn't all that much higher than local wood, even after transportation costs.”

Their contractor David Gooch, of David R. Gooch Home Improvements, was fully on board with the project and he was willing to help ensure that his customers were happy with the finished project. Jenny explains,



“Dave was great! He essentially trained most of the suppliers and sub-contractors on the green aspects. He kept the bar high - even though he had not previously undertaken a project of this sort he worked very closely with both of us, researching and trading information.”

As construction began, the Horton’s were pleased to see many of the green features that they desired going into their new house, including a composting toilet. More than 50% of the new wood products were FSC-certified including Spruce-Pine-Fir (SPF) dimensional lumber, ½” CDX plywood for sheathing, ¾” birch plywood for cabinets, exterior shingles for siding and tongue & groove (T&G) poplar for interior paneling. Dave can remember thinking, “Wow! These FSC-certified building products are excellent quality.”

The Horton’s house on the eastern shore of Maryland demonstrates that if using FSC-certified wood products to build your green home is a goal then you may need to go a little further than the common suppliers until the market for FSC products is fully established. However, success can be found in doing some additional research on product availability and by working closely with you hired professionals and suppliers. The market for FSC-certified products is in a state of constant growth and the more your local suppliers hear about your desire for FSC products, the more likely they will be made available.

Jenny describes how they were successful with a local supplier, “We ended up working extensively with Warren Woodworks, a building supplier in Easton, MD, who became interested in the challenge of sourcing materials for the project. The contractor and Warren’s staff worked closely with us in finding the best materials and weighing the trade-offs. Warren’s is now well-versed on the subject of green building and has been able to serve others on the Eastern Shore who are interested in green building.”



The FSC products in their house made up more than 50% of the new wood products used.

Photo Credit: Jenny Horton

