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INSPIRED HOUSES IN
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TELLURIDE AND MORE

Sustainability is a growing consideration for buyers eyeing houses in the West

Going the Green Mile

above: A ten-acre ridgetop Malibu property on the market; designed by Busch Design Studio, it features numerous "smart" and "green" elements.

above: Douglas Busch, below: © Connie Moberly

WHEN GAIL McBRIDE AND HER PARTNER, FRITZ BURES, DECIDED TO BUILD A HOUSE ON LAKE TRAVIS IN TEXAS, THEY WANTED MORE THAN JUST A COMFORTABLE WATERSIDE DWELLING. So they tapped Austin's award-winning Barley + Pfeiffer Architects to create an environmentally sensitive, highly energy-efficient and healthful living space. "The home surpassed our expectations in both design and green features," says McBride, whose first-year utility bills were documented at 40 percent below those of a comparable property.

McBride and Bures are part of a growing number of home buyers who are embracing "green," or sustainable, building principles (see page 112). According to the National Association of Home Builders, green building is the most significant development in home building in the past three decades. With over thirty successful green building programs setting standards across the nation and with a residential component of the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) rating system on the boards, the future of sustainable building looks very bright.

A major reason for the onetime fringe movement's entry into the mainstream is that solid research is proving that green construction not only has a positive effect on the planet but also provides a return on investment through reduced utility costs and better resale value. As one of green building's early advocates, Barley + Pfeiffer's principal, Peter Pfeiffer, has witnessed increased interest even among previous nonbelievers. "When I explain that sustainable building will save on operating expenses, maintenance, insurance premiums and doctor visits, I've never had anyone say, 'Nah, none of those things really interest me.'"

Locating green properties can still pose a challenge. One option is to seek a broker referral from a green expert or organization. Another is to check the internet. Santa Barbara, California, architect Roy Prince recently created www.healthyhomesforsale.com, a web site on which brokers or owners can list their green properties. While Prince says that buying green may cost a few extra dollars, he suggests looking at the bigger picture. "On top of the energy savings and health benefits, there's the satisfaction that you're protecting the environment for future generations," he notes. "You can't put a price on that."