



FLORIDA GREEN
BUILDING COALITION

Green Trends

A COMMUNICATION SERVICE OF THE FLORIDA GREEN BUILDING COALITION

January 6, 2012

ARTICLES OF INTEREST:

FY2012 Appropriations Limit Energy Efficiency Funding

The new year brought the expiration of several energy efficiency tax incentives. [\[More\]](#)

How to Sell A Green Home

Builders and their sales teams need to identify what green home benefits are most compelling to their potential buyers. [\[More\]](#)

Green Is Good, Builder Insist

FGBC Treasurer Dave Armstrong Practices What He Preaches – Go Green! [\[More\]](#)

FEATURES:

Weekly Spotlight Highlights FGBC Projects

Each week the FGBC website spotlights an FGBC certified project on Home Page. Find out what's going on around the state and perhaps discover a new green building idea.

Senate Bill Aims to Block Tiered Water Rates

Senate Bill (SB) 1244 would prohibit the Public Service Commission from allowing private utilities to charge customers higher rates for using large amounts of water. Some water experts say charging people more per gallon for using large amounts of water encourages conservation and keeps water affordable for low-income families.

Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon of Florida, said the bill would seem to eliminate an important incentive for water conservation.

"The most important thing we can do for water in the state of Florida is to encourage people to conserve more," he said. "Water conservation rates are the primary tool used by utilities in order to encourage people to conserve water."

The PSC only regulates private utilities, so customers of Tallahassee and other publicly owned utilities would not be affected. Florida has 158 investor-owned water utilities serving 124,619 water customers in 36 counties, according to the PSC.

For example, the city of Tallahassee charges 14 cents per 100 gallons for the first 7,000 gallons of water used each month. That increases from 19 cents per 100 gallons for more than 7,000 gallons to 24 cents per 100 gallons for more than 20,000 gallons per month.

In addition to prohibiting tiered rates, SB 1244 requires that water provided by utilities be "reasonably free from objectionable taste, color, odor, or sand or other sediment." Utilities can be fined by the PSC for failing to provide satisfactory service.

The bill also would prohibit utilities from recovering more than 50 percent of the rate case expense or from recovering expenses from more than one rate case at a time. The bill also would establish a study committee on investor-owned water and wastewater utility systems.

Florida Ranks 3rd in Population Growth

Florida had the nation's third largest population growth in the past year. The U.S. Census reported in mid-December that Florida grew by 256,000 residents from April 2010 to July 2011. Texas and California were the only states with larger growth. Florida now has 19.1 million residents, making it the nation's fourth most populous state. Florida is within striking distance of surpassing New York in population size. All it takes is an additional 400,000 residents. If current growth trends continue, Florida could pass New York in population size in two years. [US Census Reports](#)

My Florida Regional MLS Adds "Green" Search Fields

Effective December 15, 2011, My Florida Regional MLS (MFRMLS) added "green" search fields to its MLS, enabling its REALTOR® members to be among only a handful of REALTORS® in the country to be able to search for "green" property features in their MLS. Among the new "green" search fields, there is the option to search for FGBC and LEED Green Certified properties.

"I am in the middle of a struggle with a 1957 house that has 5KW of PV Solar and cannot find good comps (comparable properties)," said Steve Wooster, a REALTOR® who works in Sarasota. "The appraisal came in low and I believe these (new search fields) will help us all properly add value to green."

In addition to these new "green" search fields, MFRMLS has also added a Green Resources section to its website, www.MFRMLS.com. [\[More\]](#)

AIA Architecture Billings Index Continues Upward Trend

The Architecture Billings Index continued its positive momentum in November and climbed to 52.0, its first positive mark since August, the American Institute of Architects reported Dec. 21. Scores lower than 50 represent declining conditions, while those greater than 50 indicate an industry-wide increase in billings. "This is a heartening development for the design and construction industry that only a few years ago accounted for nearly 10 percent of overall GDP but has fallen to slightly less than 6 percent," AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker said in a news release.

Regional index averages in November were 50.9 for the Midwest, 45.6 for the West, **54.4 for the South** and 49.1 for the Northeast. The sector breakdown included mixed practice at 41.6, institutional at 48.9, commercial/industrial at 53.9 and multifamily residential at 55.8. New project inquiries in November came in at 65.0, significantly up from the previous month's reading of 57.3. New project inquiries also operate on the 50-point threshold, with scores over 50 indicating an increase in inquiries.

Housing Starts Up 9.3 Percent in November

Housing starts increased nearly 10 percent in November and building permits also saw a significant monthly jump, according to data released Dec. 20 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Census Bureau. The November rate was the highest since April 2010.

In November, housing starts increased 9.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 685,000, up from 627,000 in October. Housing starts were up a healthy 24.3 percent from a year earlier. Single-

family starts rose 2.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 447,000 units, up from 428,000 in October. November starts for buildings with five or more residential units were more than 230,000.

November building permits climbed 5.7 percent to an annual rate of 681,000, up from 644,000 in October and almost 21 percent higher than a year earlier. Single-family permits increased 1.6 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 447,000. Permits for buildings with five or more residential units hit 224,000 in November.

While starts and permits increased for the month, completions decreased slightly. Housing completions were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 542,000, which is 5.6 percent below October's rate and 1.6 percent lower than the rate a year earlier. Single-family completions in November hit 444,000, which is 0.7 percent below October. November completions for buildings with five or more residential units were 99,000.

Florida Existing Home Sales Rise

Sales of existing single-family homes in Florida rose 11 percent last month compared to November 2010, but prices remained stable, according to data released Wednesday by the Florida Association of Realtors. There were 12,996 home resales in November, but the median sale price decreased \$500 from the same time last year to \$130,100.

Condominium sales ticked up 2 percent over November 2010, and the median sales price jumped up to \$86,700 from \$83,000, an increase of 4 percent. As far as condo sales, 5,590 were sold in November, compared to 5,464 units sold in November 2010. In the first 11 months of this year about 14,000 more homes and 130 more condos were sold compared to the same time period in 2010.

ACEEE Nader Blasts Congress Actions on Lighting

Steven Nader, Executive Director of the American Council on Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) released a statement in late December blasting members of Congress for trying to reverse lighting efficiency standards adopted in 2007.

"It is unfortunate that some members of Congress have inserted a provision in the federal appropriations bill seeking to derail implementation of lighting efficiency standards enacted in 2007 and signed by then-President Bush," Nader stated. "Contrary to misinformation being spread by some lamp standard opponents, the standards do not ban incandescent lamps, but merely require incandescent lamps to be more efficient. Five manufacturers are now producing and selling efficient incandescent bulbs that meet the standards. With the new budget provision, the law is still in effect, but the Department of Energy cannot spend money to enforce it. Law-abiding companies will follow the law. Less scrupulous companies will take advantage of the lack of enforcement, selling products that waste energy and increase energy costs for consumers. If many manufacturers take advantage of the lack of enforcement, recent investments that these five manufacturers have made to produce efficient lamps could be undermined. Public opinion polls show that the standards continue to have broad support---two-thirds of Americans support the lighting standard (61% call it a good law), and five-sixths (84%) are satisfied or very satisfied with the alternative bulbs, according to a USA Today/Gallup poll (February 2011). We hope that as more and more consumers use the improved-efficiency incandescent bulbs and discover that fears about the standards are unjustified, pressure to extend the enforcement moratorium will decline," according to Nader. [\[Poll\]](#)