

Increasing the competitive edge with ENERGY STAR® Certified homes

Case Study

Contractor Name:
Natale Builders

Location:
Clarence, New York

Measures Implemented:

- Well-informed builders about energy efficiency building practices
- Tight, thermal building envelope
- Proper ventilation
- Energy-efficient lighting

Benefits:

- ENERGY STAR® Certified Homes are distinctive
- Healthy living environment
- Reduced energy costs compared to conventionally built homes

Background

For Natale Builders, construction of a New York ENERGY STAR® Certified Home literally begins at home. “We try to always build projects that we would live in, doing them the right way,” said Larry LaDuca. In charge of business development for Natale, LaDuca lives in a Natale-built New York ENERGY STAR Certified Home. He sees the program as a good foundation for building a better product.

Natale, who develops up to 40 homes a year in Buffalo and surrounding towns, relies on ENERGY STAR homes as its competitive edge. Most are single-family houses but some are patio homes and townhomes. Natale highlights the value of ENERGY STAR Certified Homes to homebuyers. Due to the positive homebuyer response, nearly all homes now constructed by Natale are ENERGY STAR Certified. Participating in the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority’s (NYSERDA) New York ENERGY STAR® Certified Home, Natale was able to make that vision a reality.

LaDuca feels customers who purchase a New York ENERGY STAR Certified Home will appreciate the lower utility costs among other benefits. Builders also benefit because it sets them apart. “I think we will get business that builders who aren’t participating in NYSEDA’s program won’t get,” he said.

Marketing Advantage

Builders are offered a high-quality program and technical support through NYSEDA. These factors help Natale’s employees understand how to build a better-quality and more efficient home.

LaDuca pointed out the large supply of well-built, available homes constructed in the past 10 to 20 years. With this abundant supply in the market, he said, “If you’re building that same product today as years ago, you don’t have much of a marketing advantage.” Comparing the ENERGY STAR brand as a value akin to endorsement by the Better Business Bureau, he said, “We believe in the product, we believe in being green. It’s better for the environment and it’s better for the client.”

“If one house is a New York ENERGY STAR Certified Home and the other is a conventional build, I would show the energy costs over 30 years. The difference is thousands and thousands of dollars over time.”

— Larry LaDuca,
Natale Builders

Tight Construction for Tight Budgets

New York ENERGY STAR Certified Homes have a tight thermal envelope to keep cooled and warmed air inside the house. Natale uses composite panel construction with insulation sandwiched between structural elements and thorough taping and sealing. The company builds with R40 roof insulation, R25 wall systems and R12.5 basement insulation, insulating the home from top to bottom. LaDuca stressed the need to buy the right products, such as energy-efficient lighting and proper ventilation, crucial to avoiding health hazards such as moisture build-up that could lead to mold issues. “Meeting New York ENERGY STAR Certified Homes standards makes a house healthier”, LaDuca said.

Long-term, it’s also more affordable. “You can’t control your taxes,” he noted, “but you can control how much energy you will use in a year.” When selling a home, Natale includes the cost associated with meeting New York ENERGY STAR Certified Homes program standards in the budget, explaining to buyers there are no extra costs for meeting those standards.

Homeowners Report Very Low Energy Bills

When conducting its standard six-month and one-year follow-ups with buyers, the company finds that homeowners are pleased with their energy savings. “One question we always ask is: are they surprised by their energy bills. And they’re always surprised at how low they are,” said LaDuca.

To LaDuca, a simple comparison of New York ENERGY STAR Certified Homes with conventional homes is persuasive. “If one house is a New York ENERGY STAR Certified Home and the other is a conventional build, I would show the energy costs over 30 years. The difference is thousands and thousands of dollars over time.” Bottom line? “I wouldn’t build any other way,” said LaDuca.

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