



Promising Practices

Private Sector

Energy Retrofit Program Through Local Realtor

Barbara Long is a realtor with her own home energy retrofit program. The program is delivered to buyers when they install eligible energy retrofits in the home they have just purchased. She believes her program will help her clients save money, reduce greenhouse gases, stimulate the local economy and make good on her promise to herself about making a meaningful contribution to reducing climate change.

Being a realtor, Barbara is there when a home changes hands and believes this is an opportunity for improving the energy efficiency of that home. She has been helping people buy and sell homes since 2006 and now she would like to help in a new way.

Because this is a personal business offering, it can be flexible, agile and dynamic. Barbara can offer what this particular house needs, and go beyond the standard list of items such as improved insulation and low flush toilets to include tree planting and depaving projects.

The motivation

On September 21, 2014, 400,000 people marched in Manhattan to send a message about climate change.

That was the day that Barbara Long, a local real estate agent with Your Choice Realty Corp. and Accredited Green Agent, decided to find a way to make a difference in her own small world of residential real estate.



She has had the following quote on her business cards for several years:

'The largest sources of greenhouse gases created by humans are transportation, buildings (60% residential) and waste. Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'

Since then, she has been encouraging clients to implement energy saving upgrades by sharing her knowledge about the potential for saving money and improving their comfort in the home.

However, with no federal and provincial grants for energy upgrades she found that home buyers were more often inclined to update a kitchen or bathroom before spending money on energy upgrades.

How realtors can help

Realtors like Barbara are in a unique position to see first-hand what energy upgrades a home needs and to stimulate a discussion about the need for energy efficiency in homes to reduce greenhouse gases.

Furthermore, she believes there's money in the system. By sharing her income with home buyers she is able to improve the energy efficiency of each home that changes ownership. It's a simple idea that Long hopes catches on. And maybe could even be termed part of the 'sharing economy' now being seen across the world.

"As a business owner, I can see the potential to grow a green business and fill this gap in funding."

Barbara is quick to point out that her clients will still receive full buyer representation and services including needs analysis, viewing suitable homes, understanding the buying process, access to a variety of professionals such as mortgage brokers, lawyers, home inspectors; determining a starting offer, negotiating terms, navigating the paperwork, advice on closing costs and procedures, moving tips, and hand holding. Now, in addition, they will receive advice on how to make the home they are buying more energy efficient and also receive money to help that happen.

On the horizon

Home labeling is another important piece in the home energy efficiency puzzle.

At one time home inspections were considered to be hindrances to the buying process and now they are the norm.

"Labeling a home with an energy efficiency rating is the next thing I hope will start to be common," says Long. "When consumers make purchases they look for and expect to see the associated energy ratings and costs. A house should be no different. You should know what the operating cost will be of this product, your new home."

Barbara is currently developing a program that will help sellers use the energy efficiencies of their homes to market them.

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