

## **Bay Area Building: What is our Environmental Impact?**

**Housing generates lots of waste. *We can have more - with less.***

- ❑ Buildings and their construction are responsible for nearly *one-half* of US energy use.
- ❑ More than 15% of the wood delivered to a US construction site is never actually used. Instead, it's hauled to the landfill as waste.
- ❑ Building a typical 4000 SF house in the Bay Area
  - ❑ Uses the equivalent of three acres of forest
  - ❑ Produces approximately 26 tons of construction waste.<sup>1</sup>

**We are prolific consumers. *We can do more - with less.***

- ❑ The average European uses half as much energy as a US resident; Japanese use one quarter the energy. US residents make up 5% of the earth's population but use 25% of its resources.
- ❑ Each US resident consumes the equivalent of about one ancient tree on average — every year.

**Our appetite for housing harms the environment. *It doesn't have to.***

- ❑ The EPA has listed all Bay Area creeks as impaired due to the pesticide diazinon.
- ❑ Half the earth's forests are gone, and growing demand for wood threatens those that remain.<sup>2</sup>

**And conventional practices can harm our health ... *Green materials don't.***

- ❑ Sixty percent of the ozone-depleting substances used annually in the U.S. are used in building construction and systems.<sup>3</sup>
- ❑ Formaldehyde — a poisonous gas and probable carcinogen — is used in a variety of building products, including MDF, particleboard, glues, carpet, insulation, plywood, vinyl flooring and cabinets.
- ❑ We spend 90% of our time indoors, and indoor air is 2-3 times more polluted than outside air.<sup>4</sup>

***Our choices can make the difference.***

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<sup>1</sup> NAHB

<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council

<sup>3</sup> EPA's Alternative Emissions & Reductions Branch, Global Programs Division, 2000

<sup>4</sup> American Lung Association

