Habitat For Humanity’s Green Building Focus

Even if upfront costs are higher, more durable and energy efficient materials can help homeowners reduce their carbon footprint and save on other expenses in the long run. That was the key takeaway shared by Edwin Hensley—director of U.S. construction at Habitat for Humanity—during a September 23 presentation at NFRC’s Fall Member Meeting in Charlotte.

The presentation was part of NFRC’s first Green Track education event, bringing together different stakeholders to discuss the latest trends, data and strategies for energy efficiency standards in the built environment.

As part of its mission to provide access to quality, affordable housing, Habitat for Humanity also takes into account sustainability and long-term affordability. The result is homes that can better withstand a changing climate and don’t become obsolete with the implementation of more stringent energy efficiency codes.

“We know that affordability isn’t determined just by the purchase price of a home,” Hensley said. “It includes the costs to run and maintain a home in the long-term. That’s why energy efficiency is such a central part of the Habitat strategy.”

Habitat for Humanity International established the Green Team in 2005 to hone the organization’s designs for efficiency and health. Habitat later developed Sustainable Construction Standards to guide local construction programs in the creation of efficient, healthy, affordable homes.

While some construction partners are large, others are small, volunteer-only organizations that rely on plug-and-play, easy-to-follow energy efficiency guidelines.

Hensley noted that ENERGY STAR or similar rating systems serve as the baseline certification for Habitat and its affiliates. As the science behind ENERGY STAR for fenestration product ratings, NFRC is one of the organizations that can help provide the data, certification and testing needed to ensure these projects achieve their energy efficiency goals.