

REAL ESTATE

# More real estate brokers are becoming LEED professionals

“LEED AP,” the professional designation synonymous with the green building industry, is most often found on business cards of architects, engineers and construction professionals. But commercial real estate brokers are now adding the initials to their signatures, too, in hopes of standing out

in a competitive industry hard hit by the national recession. The label stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional. The designation is granted by the U.S. Green Building Council, which has a related program where buildings earn LEED

certification for energy efficiency. Of the nearly 1,000 LEED professionals in Houston, an estimated 10 percent are commercial real estate brokers, a number that’s expected to double in as little as five years, according to Lora-Marie Bernard, executive director of U.S. Green Building Council Greater Houston Area Chapter.



NANCY SARNOFF

The increased interest, she said, is being driven by Houston’s energy-centric economy as well as a nationwide culture shift toward responsible use of natural resources. With more people interested, the Houston chapter will soon start holding regular study groups to prepare individuals for the test required to earn the accreditation. Commercial property brokers Beth Young and Henry Hagendorf, who specialize in office and medical building sales at Grubb & Ellis, recently became LEED-accredited, as most new buildings today

are being developed with energy-efficient design principles. “When it comes time to sell one of those buildings, they’re going to want someone that knows how to present it,” Young said. They each put in about 300 study hours before the test, which costs \$300 for council members and \$400 for nonmembers. The LEED AP exam is cross-cultural, Bernard said, meaning it’s not designed just for architects or engineers.

“Anyone can learn how to discuss the LEED certification process,” she said. Hagendorf figures the additional knowledge will help generate business. He and Young plan to market their services to owners of LEED-certified buildings. “In the long run, we’re confident it will pay off,” he said.

**New Y breaks ground**

As big real estate projects across the city hit the skids, the new downtown YMCA is still on track. The 120,000-square-foot

Tellepsen Family YMCA broke ground last week on a parcel of land at 808 Pease. The new building will replace the 67-year-old facility at 1600 Louisiana, a couple of blocks away. Chevron, which operates out of the old Enron buildings adjacent to the existing Y, plans to buy the block that houses aging structure after it’s demolished. That will happen after the new facility opens next year.

The Tellepsen family made a major donation to the project last year, allowing the Y to move forward. The Houston family, which operates a nearly century-old construction company, will build the new facility, too. The amount of the donation was not disclosed, but the nonprofit Y generally asks for about half the cost of construction of a project from a donor before naming it after them. Officials said the cost of the project, including the land, design services and construction, could reach \$55 million.

**Gobs of apartments**

There are more people living in apartments here than ever before. The credit crunch has helped lift demand as fewer qualify for mortgages and foreclosures have pushed people into the rental market. Last year was one of the most prolific years for apartment construction. Nearly 13,000 units were added to the inventory. That was up 13 percent from the previous year, according to a report from Grubb & Ellis, a commercial real estate firm. Another 101 projects are under way, which will bring 26,000 new units to the market over the next few years. The occupancy rate for Class A apartments, those at the highest end of the spectrum, was above 90 percent last year. Grubb & Ellis projects leasing demand to taper off this year, as the economy worsens. And construction will slow, too, because the credit crunch will keep developers from obtaining construction loans.

nancy.sarnoff@chron.com

HOUSTON MORTGAGE MONITOR

INDIVIDUAL LENDER RATES

The mortgage interest rate list represents a sampling of rates as quoted by lenders in the Houston market on Friday. rates, which may change on Monday, are for 90 percent loans and do not include origination fees. The numbers in parentheses after the rates are discount points. A point is equal to 1 percent of the loan amount.

Lender	15 yr loans up to \$417K	30 yr loans up to \$417K	15 yr loans over \$417K	30 yr loans over \$417K	Days Locked
Asset Mortgage Corp.	4 ¾(0)	4 ¾(0)	5 ⅞(0)	6 ½(0)	30
EMC Mortgage	4 ¼(0)	4 ⅝(0)	7 ½(0)	7(0)	21
Fidelity One Mortgage	4 ¾(0)	4 ⅞(0)	5 ¾(0)	6(0)	30
Holland Mortgage	4 ½(0)	4 ⅝(0)	7 ¾(0)	8 ½(0)	30
Home N Mortgage	4 ¾(0)	4 ⅞(0)	5 ⅞(0)	6(0)	30
Hometown America	4 ¾(0)	4 ⅝(0)	6(0)	6 ¼(0)	30
Infinity Mortgage	4 ¾(0)	4 ⅞(0)	5 ⅞(0)	6 ½(0)	30
Mortgage Associates	4 ¾(0)	4 ⅞(0)	6 ¾(0)	7(0)	30
Optima Mortgage	4 ¼(0)	4 ½(0)	6 ¾(0)	6 ⅞(0)	45
Petrie Mortgage	4 ¾(0)	4 ¾(0)	5 ⅝(0)	6 ¼(0)	30
PrimeLoan.com	5 ¾(0)	6 ⅞(0)	7 ⅞(0)	7 ½(0)	25
Residential Finance	5 ¼(1)	5 ½(1)	6 ¾(1)	7(1)	30
Silver Leaf Financial	6(0)	6 ⅞(0)	7(0)	7 ⅞(0)	30
Texas Mortgage Link	6(0)	6 ⅞(0)	7(0)	7 ¾(0)	30
Texcorp Mortgage Bankers	4 ¾(0)	4 ⅞(0)	6 ½(0)	6 ¾(0)	15