

# The San Diego Union-Tribune.

NEWS & NOTES ABOUT REAL ESTATE

## Front Porch

---

May 11, 2008

### **GREEN-SPARK TO HELP FIRE VICTIMS**

A grass-roots organization called Green-Spark is promoting sustainable and fire-resistant rebuilding following San Diego County's 2007 wildfires.

Green-Spark acts as an information clearinghouse for "green" building, said co-founder Jennifer Owens. It also helps fire victims understand the rebuilding process, providing education, resources and advice from experts in green construction.

Building "green" means improving the way builders use such resources as energy, water and materials. It calls for reducing the impact of construction on health and the environment.

"I am very active in the green building advocacy community," said Owens, a civil engineer. "I really wanted to find a resource for fire survivors to rebuild green. There wasn't a local foundation that would provide green building assistance throughout the whole process."

Most wildfire victims are in the early stages of home design, she said. While nature-friendly construction can cost more, it doesn't have to be prohibitively expensive, she added. Eventually it will pay for itself.

"It really is feasible on any budget," she said. "It really is within reach. Your operation and maintenance is so much less expensive in terms of your electric and gas bills because you are using less heat, using less water. The payback times can be from one to three years.

"We believe that given the opportunity and knowledge, anyone can greatly benefit and find comfort in rebuilding their homes with eco-friendly materials and methods."

Rebuilding a home that is fire-resistant and energy efficient benefits society and the environment, said Malia Durand, who co-founded the nonprofit organization with Owens in November.

On its Web site, [green-spark.org](http://green-spark.org), the group has information on local, state and federal financial incentives available to homeowners who implement alternative energy systems. The site also lists upcoming public events that provide information on green building topics.

– EMMET PIERCE

view this article online at:

[http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080511/news\\_1h11porch.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080511/news_1h11porch.html)