

D.R. Horton Inks Deal to Build Homes With OSB Made From Grass, not Lumber

My June 1 column featured a startup called **Plantd** which came up with an alternative to lumber-based OSB boards with ones made from grass. **D.R. Horton**, a major builder of new homes, helped get the product approved and certified as a building material. You can read that June article on-line at JimSmithColumns.com.

In July, D.R. Horton ordered 250,000 of the panels to use in building 1,000 homes starting in 2024.

OSB is the sheathing that is used on the exterior walls of all "stick-built" homes, as well as on subfloors and on roofs. Although I don't know this as a fact, I suspect that the sheer weight and volume of OSB panels equals or exceeds that of the 2x4s, 2x6s and the joists and trusses to which it is attached.

Using Plantd's panels as a replacement for wood-based OSB has huge ramifications on the preserva-

tion of forests, the absorption of carbon dioxide and the fight against climate change.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH Realtor®

As you can read on their website, "*Timber, steel and concrete enabled remarkable progress, but today they are the problem, not the solution. Continuing to build with these materials accelerates climate change and promises to impede progress by threatening our future on this planet.*"

It is the mitigation of climate change that motivated the company's founders to develop their unique product. At the top of their lengthy home page is this goal: "*Carbon negative materials for every new home and building on earth.*" Scroll down, and you find this statement: "*We envision a world that stands in balance with nature—a world built from grass ... A world where buildings no longer cause climate change but*

are central to the solution. Where they are stronger, more durable, and more affordable. And where their walls and structures lock away vast amounts of carbon dioxide pulled from the atmosphere."

You have probably heard of "carbon sequestration" — removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and typically storing it underground. The oceans also sequester carbon, which has become a problem, endangering ocean life and disrupting the pH balance of ocean water.

Plants are among the biggest sequesters of carbon dioxide because it's their primary food. You have heard the Amazon rainforest described as "the earth's lungs," although it functions in the opposite manner of our lungs, absorbing carbon dioxide and emitting oxygen.

Trees sequester carbon until they

are burned, and building materials made from lumber prolong that sequestration. But trees take a long time to grow, making their absorption of carbon dioxide less efficient than the propriety grass developed by Plantd, which can reach 20 feet in height in a single growing season as shown in the photo at left. Plantd claims that



14,000 acres of grass plantations can produce as much material as 400,000 acres of managed timber lands. (Also, the grass is perennial, unlike trees, so it doesn't need to be replanted after harvesting.)

Another feature of the North Carolina company is that it operates out of a former tobacco factory and has hired farmers who were put out of work when the factory closed to grow the grass for their factory.

The company's website claims that their product is stronger, lighter, more moisture resistant, carbon negative, and will cost the same as regular OSB.

Plantd's panels have just two ingredients: the perennial grass plus a small amount of resin (with the formaldehyde removed before it reaches Plantd's factory). This creates a low-VOC product with fewer chemical additives compared to other products, according to Plantd.

There's a video on the home page which shows the panels being installed on a D.R. Horton home under construction. I have the link to that video on the posting of this at <http://realestatetoday.substack.com>.

I have written about many technological developments in home construction over the years, but this product has me more excited than all of them put together. I can't wait to see the first homes in our metro area being built with this product.

Get this column by email every Wednesday. Subscribe at <http://RealEstateToday.substack.com>. If you'd like to get my political column, subscribe at <http://TalkingTurkey.substack.com>.

Guest Column: Sellers Can & Should Choose Their Title Companies

By GARRY WOLFF, Owner CompareTitleCompanies.com

It's easy to get information overload when selling your house, but what if you don't get all the information you need from your real estate broker? Besides getting top dollar for your home, what about saving money and better protecting your real estate closing by shopping your title insurance & closing services? The Denver Metro Association of Realtors reports the median price of a single-family home sold in November was \$625K. The costs for title insurance and closing services for a \$625K home ranges from \$1,247 up to \$2,563, a difference of \$1,316.

Title companies are regulated by the Colorado Division of Insurance, which encourages consumers to shop their title insurance and closing services.

Sellers shouldn't assume that their listing agent has shopped and compared their recommended title company, as the Division of Real Estate that licenses and regulates real estate brokers doesn't require brokers to do so. Typically, most brokers just recommend their favorite title company, regardless of the costs to you.

While title insurance may be somewhat unfamiliar to sellers, it's important to note the title policies and coverages are identical among all Colorado title companies, and that the title policy benefits the buyer and not the seller. More than likely, your listing agent did not mention this to you.

Also, did your broker recommend getting a seller's "Closing Protection Letter" (CPL) which provides additional protections for your money and the closing process? Again, the Division of Real Estate doesn't require brokers to inform you of such information.

Based on such information not being provided by brokers, a request was submitted by me, Garry Wolff of CompareTitleCompanies.com, to the Division of Real Estate proposing a new "Disclosure of Information, Duties, And Authorization Regarding Title Insurance & Closing Settlement Services" for the benefit of sellers and buyers. As of now, the Colorado Real Estate Commission has not acted on that request. [A copy of the proposed disclosure is posted on Substack.com.]

While waiting for the Division to review and approve this needed disclosure, there is a solution to this dilemma. When listing your home for sale, request your Broker to shop your title insurance and closing services by using www.CompareTitleCompanies.com, which provides a free one-stop shopping solution and takes less than five minutes. Also, ask your broker to request a Closing Protection Letter when they order your title insurance services.

CompareTitleCompanies.com is a unique marketing tool for title companies and a free resource for consumers and brokers.

Have a website questions? Email

Garry at Contact@CompareTitleCompanies.com. For questions about the duties and information provided by your broker, you may contact the Division of Real Estate by email at dora_realestate_web-site@state.co.us.

Jim Smith on Title Insurance:

Like any seasoned listing agent, I have my preferred title companies based on years of experience working with them. I have found the escrow officers of some firms more attentive and better at handling issues that may arise, so I definitely recommend one for my seller to use.

I admit that I should remind them it's their decision and point them to Garry's website, but a choice based on it would be based solely on price. Then we could talk.

Where I think agents go wrong is when they have an in-house title company and they get spiffed for "capturing" a seller for that title company and probably don't suggest their client shop other companies.



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"I cannot do all the good the world needs, but the world needs all the good I can do." —Jana Stanfield

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