

Going green a cost saving measure for businesses, homeowners

By VALLI FINNEY

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NAPLES — Collier County is slowly going green but more can be done.

That's what about 50 people who attended Thursday's League of Women Voters of Collier County symposium at the county's first green hotel, The Naples Hilton, learned.

In addition, Florida has moved forward in trying to get people on board with going green. And visitors are demanding it.

"You have what I call the trifecta," said Jennifer Languell, founder of Trifecta Construction Solutions and a nationally recognized leader in green building.

"No. 1 is the desire to save money. No. 2, it was an executive order you will stay in green lodging. It's not an option. And you have the visitors, especially Europeans, looking specifically for green lodging," she said. "You can't beat that combination."

The executive order dictates that state employees who travel must stay in green lodging if it's available.

Languell has been involved with green building for many years. She gutted her 2,000 square foot house constructed in the 1970s and renovated it. Her electric bills typically range in the \$30 to \$50 range.

She explained that green lodging actually began in the United States because of a tragedy.

"The driver for green lodging was 9/11," she said, referring to Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorists crashed jetliners into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania. "Because travel was down so significantly, the hotels and motels had to do something to save money."

Languell and Nicholas G. Penniman IV, former publisher of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and senior vice president of newspaper operations for Pulitzer Publishing Co. who is the immediate past chairman of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and Clark Hill, Naples Hilton's general manager, each gave a presentation on how sustainability and going green can occur.

Penniman said the Conservancy is headed toward zero energy during reconstruction and retrofitting. Water management is the Conservancy's top priority.

Hill explained how the hotel has changed the way it expends energy to include only changing sheets after the fourth day for extended stay guests, using lower energy light bulbs, placing recycle containers throughout the property and planting jasmine on a flat roof that gets watered by condensation from equipment.

All agreed going green — reducing water and electrical consumption, preventing run-off into storm sewers, removing sod and replacing it with native vegetation and various other things — costs money at the beginning but can save dollars in the long-run.

One thing to remember, Languell said, is deed restrictions are pre-empted by a couple of state laws: A homeowner can plant native landscaping and line-dry their clothing.

But one thing she wants everyone to remember, it all comes down to money.

“It’s great to think we are all here to save the planet,” she said. “But, if I can’t tell them (builders and homeowners) it’s going to save them money, they aren’t interested.”

