

Andersen CEO: Affordable green homes 'transformative'

By: [Brian Johnson](#), October 23, 2015 3:13 pm

Andersen Corp. CEO Jay Lund said Friday that the building industry "can and is" making a meaningful difference when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in homes.

But he hastened to add that there's room for improvement. Though green technology is out there and building materials are becoming more efficient, one of the challenges is to find ways to make emerging technology more affordable and accessible, Lund said.

"We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go," Lund told a business gathering Friday at the University of Minnesota's McNamara Alumni Center.



Andersen Corp. CEO Jay Lund told a gathering at the Great River Greening Business Forum Friday that the homebuilding industry is making strides in affordable green homes, but there's room for improvement. Staff photo: Bill Klotz

Lund was the featured speaker at the "Great River Greening Business Forum," an annual event dedicated to exploring collaborative ways to solve environmental problems facing businesses and communities.

Lund talked about the challenges of making high-performance dwellings more mainstream and affordable, and cited a sustainable Habitat for Humanity neighborhood in River Falls, Wisconsin, as an example of progress.

It's an important topic because buildings on average are responsible for 40 percent of U.S. energy consumption, and the building sector is the largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, according to Great River Greening, a St. Paul-based nonprofit conservation organization.

Lund said the industry is making strides. For example, homebuilders throughout the country are using solar panels, and green building certification is making inroads in residential construction, he said.

But the challenge is to go "deeper and even faster" down the road of sustainability, he said.

Given the important role that windows and doors play in the energy performance of a home, [Andersen Corp.](#) has long been focused on energy efficiency and sustainability, Lund said.

[Founded](#) in 1903 on the banks of the St. Croix River, Bayport-based Andersen Corp. understands how “important it is to live in harmony with the river and the environment,” Lund said.

“We like to tell people that we are in the window and door business, but the reality is we are in the energy-conservation business,” Lund said.

When it comes to energy conservation, the homebuilding industry is seeing signs of progress from the ground up.

In River Falls, Wisconsin, for example, the St. Croix Valley Habitat for Humanity chapter is finishing up its [Eco Village](#) development, a neighborhood of 18 highly efficient affordable houses.

The development already boasts six of the 10 most “ecofriendly” homes in Wisconsin, Lund said.

Eco Village partners include the city of River Falls, the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Andersen Corp., and Apple Valley-based Uponor North America, among other public and private entities.

Jim Cooper, Eco Village project manager, said in an interview that construction of the first Eco Village home started in 2012 on city-donated land. Crews are finishing up the last four homes.

Fourteen are already occupied. The houses are “super-insulated” with very tight construction and a range of renewable energy products, including photovoltaic solar arrays, radiant floor systems, and solar thermal in some cases, Cooper said.

Cooper said all the homes are functioning at or close to “net zero,” which means they produce as much energy as they use.

Private sector partners, who donated time, products and expertise, were critical for the development, he said.

“The technology and processes are changing rapidly as we learn more about what it takes to build a sustainable, energy-efficient home,” he said. “Any time you are on the cutting edge in construction, it tends to cost more rather than less. In order to allow us to push the envelope and create a more sustainable home, the help of our corporate partners is critical, it’s very important.”

While the homes play a big role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the environmental benefits are only part of the story.

Affordable green housing makes a big difference for the low-income people who live there, because they save on energy costs and home maintenance, which frees up money for food, education and other needs, Lund said.

Lund said one Eco Village homeowner has saved close to \$900 a year on energy costs alone.

“This is transformative. This is a big deal,” he said.

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