

## Green choices for Ashe County

Eco-Green finding green living solutions for the future

By Ron Fitzwater

Green living. The words are being used more and more often in talking about new construction and community infrastructure but few people really know what it means. For some, it is finding new sources for energy such as solar or geo-thermal to reduce dependence on ever more expensive petroleum based energy, while to others it means being kinder to the environment and reducing their carbon footprint by changing how they live their lives.



For people who want to build and remodel in Ashe County with an eye on green living, help in choosing what to do and what not to do has not been exactly plentiful. Until now.

Eco-Green, LLC is a collaborative green living consultant firm now open in West Jefferson specializing in helping clients with green building, green remodeling, operating a green business, conservation site design and low impact development.

According to the company biography, Eco-Green is made up of a group of local business professionals, land planners and low impact developers who are committed to design and construction strategies that promote the economic health and well-being of families, clients, the local community and the environment.

Executive Director of Eco-Green, Steve Ashley said as an Ashe County native, he started the business in part to make a positive impact on his home community, for his children and for Ashe Countians yet to come.

"The whole thing started when we found a 48 acre tract of land that we wanted to develop on Buck Mountain in the Beaver Creek area. We wanted to develop the property in a low-impact way and that gave us the idea for the company," Ashley said.

Ashley said that in doing research for the development, he and his partners began to amass so much useful information about low impact development and green building that they decided to open the consulting firm to help others who were in the planning stages for other green communities or wanting to remodel their homes in a more green manner.

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Ashley said that for consulting he foresees advising on remodeling more than initial building techniques.

"We will go through and show our clients various techniques that will work along with their budget to make improvements to their homes. For example, we may suggest that someone change their windows out for better energy efficiency. We may suggest that they do the work when they receive their tax returns so that the expense is not a restriction," Ashley said.

Eco-Green is not a financial consultant firm and while they can make suggestions as to affordable ways to implement green ideas they do not assist with financing of projects and Ashley said people would need to find financial services from other places. Eco-Green will provide estimates and supporting documents for people to take to their financial institutions.

Eco-Green will be contracting with local construction professionals to conduct visits at their client's homes and identify ways that they can remodel using green concepts and techniques that include the houses and landscaping and best use practices of property.

Eco-Green is practicing what they preach in the development of the Green Rock community.

Green Rock at Buck Mountain, according to Ashley, is a green housing community with houses built according to National Association of Home Builders green building guidelines which state that during design, construction and operation of the homes, conservation, resource preservation and environmental quality are factored into every step in the process.

The development will be built with a protective barrier around areas that have been identified as critical vegetation or wildlife zone in order to protect them. The plans will, according to Ashley, create a community that will use lower amounts of energy, improve water quality, reduce waste, decrease utility expenses and produce naturally grown food sources on 48 acres with 15 home sites.

"The infrastructure at Green Rock will be unlike any in the county that I know of. The road will be a previous road to allow for seepage of rainwater back into the ground. We are using bio-retention areas and rain gardens to aid in water run-off. We are going to have community gardens and hiking trails, horse shoe pits and archery range on eight acres of untouched land," Ashley said.

Future plans for the company include investigating in alternative energy sources including solar and geo-thermal which is surprisingly possible in the High Country according to Ashley.

Eco-Green is open and available for consultations. The office is located at 19 East Ashe Street, West Jefferson and appointments can be made by calling (336) 846-4545. For more information about Eco-Green, click to [www.eco-green.com](http://www.eco-green.com).

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Health Tip



Enjoy More  
Fruits  
and  
Veggies

Make fruits and  
vegetables half  
your plate!

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474 Industrial Park Drive / PO Box 1815 • Boone, North Carolina 28607 • Telephone 828.264.6397 • Fax 828.262.0282 • Classifieds 828.264.1881