

# The Sustainable Attributes of Exterior Cladding Materials

## A True Look at “Green” Claims



Clay Brick – The Most Sustainable  
Green Building Material Made

## VINYL VS. BRICK

**P**rior to making decisions on cladding materials and their impact on the environment, it's important for builders to consider the true facts regarding siding products' green positions. Many materials claim green or sustainable attributes, but a comparison between vinyl and brick shows the true story. A quick review of the facts will show that vinyl is not as green as you think.

### IN THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS

#### RECYCLED CONTENT

##### VINYL

- Some companies claim 80% recycled content; however, there is no test data to support these claims.

##### BRICK

- Contains both pre- and post-consumer recycled content, depending on the manufacturer.

#### MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION

##### VINYL

- PVC used in production is made at locations near oil refineries, which are generally located only near coastal ports.
- This makes extraction requirements within 500 miles of a project often difficult to meet.

##### BRICK

- Waste products such as methane gas from landfills and sawdust used in production, depending on the manufacturer.
- At least two plants located within 500 miles of all but one of 50 largest MSAs.

#### THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION

##### VINYL

- Vinyl makes no claims of third-party green certification.

##### BRICK

- Manufacturers can achieve third-party certification for extent of recycled content, use of alternative energy, and amount of resources reduced.

### ON THE JOB SITE

#### WASTE MANAGEMENT

##### VINYL

- Some construction waste is recycled, but it represents only 2% of the vinyl siding market.

##### BRICK

- Reusable scrap materials, minimal packaging.
- Very little on-site waste produced due to modular units.

#### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

##### VINYL

- Higher energy efficiency claims are due to inclusion of rigid board insulation in upscale vinyl siding, but this represents only a small portion of overall vinyl siding production.

##### BRICK

- Homes clad in brick use 1%-2% less energy than homes clad with vinyl siding.
- Thermal mass properties.

#### LIFE CYCLE & DURABILITY

##### VINYL

- 25 year life span.
- Low maintenance requirements.
- Once damaged it must be replaced.

##### BRICK

- 100 year life span.
- Low maintenance requirements.

#### SAFETY & SECURITY

##### VINYL

- Does not provide 1-hour fire resistance rating.
- Cannot protect from wind-blown debris.
- Melts when low-E windows, skylights, or dark roofs re-radiate heat.
- Burning produces dioxin and PCBs creating health risks.

##### BRICK

- Provides 1-hour fire resistance rating.
- Offers superior resistance to wind-blown debris.

#### RECYCLABILITY

##### VINYL

- Cannot be recycled because of high contaminant levels.
- Cannot be salvaged for reuse.
- Recycling efforts are so weak that the Association of Post Consumer Plastic Recyclers labeled the program a failure in 2000.

##### BRICK

- Unfired or scrap brick is recycled back into the production stream.
- Brick from demolition can be crushed and recycled into new brick or used as brick chips.
- Brick can also be used as a subbase material for pavements.

*According to experts and certification groups, the future of green home building and sustainable design resides in the life expectancy and life cycle of the building, energy efficiency, and the impact building materials have at the end of their useful life. The Brick Industry offers building professionals a product that assists in all three areas.*

## BRICK IS A NATURALLY SUSTAINABLE MATERIAL

- ▶ Use of abundant natural resources, clay and shale.
- ▶ Improved manufacturing processes use less energy and reduce emissions.
- ▶ Use of alternative fuel resources such as landfill gas and wood waste materials.
- ▶ Strategically located plants to help reduce transport emissions.
- ▶ Contributes to energy efficient homes with high thermal mass.
- ▶ Long life cycle, durable, low maintenance, no painting required.
- ▶ Recyclable and biodegradable thereby reducing its embodied energy.
- ▶ A built-in and in-demand market for recycled re-use of old brick.

## BRICK IS NOT ONLY A SUSTAINABLE CLADDING MATERIAL, BUT IT ALSO ADDS SIGNIFICANT VALUE TO A HOME AND OFFERS NUMEROUS OTHER BENEFITS

- ▶ Consumers prefer brick over other cladding/siding materials.\*
- ▶ Brick's natural beauty is timeless and design possibilities are endless.
- ▶ Brick's longevity and local availability make it one of the greenest building products made today.
- ▶ Brick conveys a message of quality, image, and prestige about the home builder and community.
- ▶ Brick has the longest history of product performance and durability.
- ▶ Brick is virtually maintenance-free.
- ▶ Brick is a perfect fit within any architectural style.

\* Source: Ducker Worldwide 2008 homebuyer research study

## BRICK: THE GREEN POINTS ADD UP

### National Green Building Standard™

Brick can assist in contributing up to **175½ points** out of approximately 2,000 possible points

### LEED for Homes™ (USGBC)

Brick can assist in contributing up to **19½ points** out of a possible 136 points

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE SUSTAINABLE ATTRIBUTES OF CLAY BRICK, CONTACT THE BRICK INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION.**



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