

# home design guide

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## simple green



“Going green” – using eco-friendly building materials, fixtures and appliances that save money on both power and water – has been a growing trend in the homebuilding industry, but are home owners and home buyers really interested in using these materials when buying their new home or planning a remodel?

The answer is *yes*, according to most of the recent homebuyer preference surveys, but with one condition. Most home buyers are not willing to pay extra. The comforting thought of saving the environment is not enough incentive; most people need to see a real savings in their monthly bills. Home owners and buyers need to see the numbers pencil out to prove that their green investment will save with lower utility bills (water and power) and provide a payback in a maximum of 3-4 years.

The available options for green building can be overwhelming and possibly expensive. If you are interested in saving money on your monthly utility bills and you are not fully aware of all that green building offers, consider the few green basics outlined below:

**DESIGN IT RIGHT.** Start with a sensible home design that adequately meets your needs, but delve into the details. Make good choices on the things hidden behind the walls that you really don't see, but make a big impact on costs and energy.

**THINK STRATEGICALLY** with an upgraded thermal envelope – your floors, walls, doors, windows and roof:

- **Seal for Air Leaks** - Use Polysealant between your foundation and exterior walls and around your door and window frames to help prevent air infiltration.
- **Upgrade Your Insulation** - Instead of code-minimum blown insulation, upgrade to spray foam. Spray foam can carry a higher insulation value and expands into all the holes and gaps between building materials to stop air leaks.
- **Energy Efficient Windows** - Make careful choices on your window selections, especially in new construction. Consider spending the extra money on energy efficient windows - it will pay off in the long run.

**SOLAR HOT WATER HEATER.** According to David Bassette of AllSolar Service Company, this is the low-hanging fruit for going green. It is one of the best values and where you receive the quickest payback on your investment. Any appliance that heats, including your stove or water heater, draws the most power. Instead of keeping heating coils on continuously, replace them with a solar system and you can see an instant savings of \$50-\$100 per month.

**SAVE WATER.** A low flow shower head and faucet will save water and it doesn't take long

to get used to them. They are also becoming part of building codes, so why not be ahead of the game? Toilets are required by code to be 1.6 gallon-per-minute flushes, and dual-flush toilets are growing in popularity. Remember you can cut back on your lawn's irrigation by planting native species that require less water.

**EFFICIENT A/C, APPLIANCES & LIGHT FIXTURES.** Install an air conditioner with a rating of SEER 14 or better and have both the unit and the ductwork within air conditioned space. Buy only Energy Star rated appliances and lighting fixtures with compact fluorescent or LED bulbs.

Survey after survey show that green design remains one of the most popular new home design trends that cannot be ignored. This is not just a trend that will fall to the wayside, as it is required in updated building codes and more manufacturers are making their products eco-friendly. When you consider green design, do your homework with cost comparisons and be sure that the money you save on your monthly bills will outweigh the initial investment.

### Do you have questions about home design or remodeling?



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