

## Building Green: Incorporating Sustainable Design

So many people are talking about building green. Why? Each day, it seems we learn more and more about how we negatively affect our environment--and our whole planet. Most of us don't like to think that our homes and lifestyles do significant damage. After all, we just want to support our families and have a high quality of life, right?

But our homes do harm the planet. Because of this, it's important for homeowners and builders to be knowledgeable about building green (or "sustainable design").

"Building green" features the design and construction of buildings that have a comparatively low environmental impact. To do this, green builders must be efficient in the use of resources and use fewer environmentally harmful processes and building materials than traditional builders. And what effect does green building have? USGBC has published data to confirm that building green uses 35% less energy, far fewer non-renewable materials, and less landfill space for waste. Almost as important, building green makes for both safer and healthier offices and homes.

### What are Sustainable Designers' Main Concerns when Building Green?

The goal of building green is to maintain quality of life while lessening a building's impact on the environment. Sustainable designers generally consider the following design features when building green:

**Efficient Energy Use.** This is probably the biggest one. As they're being built, green buildings should use processes and products which require less energy. A green building should also have a high energy efficiency in the long term, integrating design features like comprehensive insulation and "passive solar design," which supplies thermal protection to a home.

When building green, many designers also include a renewable independent energy source to power (or partially power) the home. Renewable energy (such as solar energy) significantly lowers a building's impact on the environment.

**General Design.** The size, site, and shape of a home have a large effect on its energy efficiency. Simpler shapes (such as a traditional box shape) are often used when building green.

Another common technique used in building green is Optimum Value Engineering, or OVE. This framing method reduces the quantity of wood used to build a home, and it also leaves more room inside the walls for insulation.

**Environmentally Friendly Materials.** Building green means using non-toxic materials which are recycled or sustainably produced. Any materials used in building green should require less energy to produce and process than conventional materials.

**Long-Term Durability.** Simply put, quality products last longer, and so need to be replaced less often. Using quality materials reduces landfill waste and reduces the need for producing replacements, which has a significant impact on the environment.

### About the Author

For a full report on [green building](#), see <http://www.aia.org/walkthewalk> Click here to read more on [green design](#).

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