

8 Important Things to Consider when Building Green

Green doesn't have to be about achieving the best green rating possible. Remember that every little green bit helps! Here are some very basic concepts to keep in mind when building green.

Climate and Locale – Respecting the site and local weather patterns increases energy-efficiency and durability. Are the building materials, roof pitch, and heating/cooling systems durable in this climate and location? How much site work needs to be done? Is it close to amenities, public transit, and utilities?

People Matter – Considering form and function helps a house become a home. What rooms will be used the most and what is the connection to the outdoors? Don't forget that green can also mean visually-appealing and cozy!

Think Small – A home with a modest footprint requires fewer building materials and less energy than a larger home. One place to look for savings is in designs that reduce hallway lengths. Are there any appliances or heating/cooling systems that can be downsized and still be effective?

Cool Naturally and Heat Efficiently – The simplest green design strategy also has the biggest impact – design and orient the home with passive solar heating and cooling in mind and combine natural cross ventilation with ceiling fans instead of air conditioning.

Go Native – Choosing local materials minimizes environmental impact and promotes local economic viability. When deciding between products, choose the local option. Don't forget to employ local contractors and designers that have insider knowledge.

Old before New – Many “green” techniques have actually been around for centuries. Remember that new isn't always better. Apply this adage to all aspects of the building process.

Sustainable Materials - Choose and use materials with low embodied energy; items that are renewable, durable, locally produced, non-toxic, and certified as sustainable. Plan your design to use less and waste less of them as well.

Insulate and Ventilate – Good insulation is important, but how the house is sealed and ventilated is just as important for both energy-efficiency and moisture control. Choose products and techniques that prevent toxics from entering the home, and also trapping them there.

