

## **Green Building: What's It & Who's Doing It?**

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### **What is 'Green Building' Today and Who is Doing It?**

Many green building requirements and practices have been in place even before the first building codes. Ever since man first tried to get out of the rain and stay warm we have been following green building guidelines. We've always wanted our shelters to keep us safe and allow us to live our lives. We were trying to make our shelters last as long as possible. We built from the materials that were available.

Over time we became very good at living with nature, however with the availability of cheap gas and electric energy we forgot the basics and became wasteful and sloppy. We forgot about the heat of the sun and pushed it out with air conditioners. We blasted the cold with the fires fueled from the age of dinosaurs. We built with materials that contained toxins. We forgot that a house breathes and is a system that requires all its parts to be balanced.

Green building is about remembering the laws of nature. Green building is first and foremost remembering what we already know and then building with these principles correctly in a way that fits the region and climate. Today in California if you are involved in construction you will be involved in green building. As our current energy sources, water, and materials become more expensive and less available we are forced by this reality to change the way we have been doing things. We are currently experiencing a fast paced trend to implement new building codes and regulations to deal with the situation. Many people are trying to determine what they need to do to lessen the negative impacts already at hand.

People, businesses and governments are looking for the facts. Many industries and institutions are trying to avoid changes and are spreading disinformation. There are many entities sprouting up all over selling invalid products and systems. Thankfully these forces are losing their place as the green building movement goes mainstream.

There are programs such as the United States Green Building Council providing facts and advocating best practices. California is leading the way in the United States with its efforts to meet today's environmental challenges. There are many educational programs and green building tours available in communities today.

Green building is a whole-systems approach for designing and constructing buildings that:

- 1 are integrated into the wider site and community**
- 2 consume less energy and water**
- 3 are durable and easy to maintain**
- 4 use resource efficient techniques & materials**
- 5 are healthier, safer & more comfortable**

Green building today is generally divided into categories such as:

Energy efficiency, Resource conservation, Indoor air quality, Light and ventilation, Durability, Water conservation and Community.

The reasons for incorporating many of the green building designs and practices into building and remodeling projects have become well established. They include:

- 1 Quality (not just meeting the minimum)**
- 2 High performance (measured to be better than the standard performance)**
- 3 Effective (it works and delivers the service well)**
- 4 Smart (it has been thought-out ahead and will work)**
- 5 Durable (enduring, timeless, classic, building the historical structure of the future)**
- 6 Healthier (offers comfort, security, safety)**

Costs associated with Green Building are not unlike or apart from any other project budget decisions. You start with a higher level of design and planning. The construction must be done correctly. Only qualified tradesmen should be used. Remember cheap labor is often the most expensive kind. The initial costs associated with quality green design and building practices will provide ongoing cost reductions (returns on investment, while providing a higher quality indoor environment.). When compared to the hopefully soon-to-be extinct cheap tract home built with low skill and flimsy materials, you will pay 5 to 10% more. If you compare green building to a well designed quality-built structure, you will pay a quickly returning 0 to 5% more.

**Benefits of Green Building:**

The benefits of green designed and built homes, buildings and structures are many; healthy indoor air quality, daylight, ventilation, comfort, reduced energy and maintenance costs. They have become well established and are generally expected in today's construction. It can also be beautiful, well built and long lasting. All these things and more are resulting in greater resale value, higher rents and reduced vacancies.

**Considerations:**

Green building and design considerations vary from project to project due to the region, climate, culture, economy, resources and use of the building or structure. Today there is a fast growing pool of trained qualified professionals. The United States Green Building Council is a national program and offers many training programs. The USGBC has a point rating system called L.E.E.D. (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.) Their certification is the Accredited Professional "LEED AP". The 'Build it Green' program is a California point-based program that trains and certifies Professionals. (Certified Green Building Professional) "CGBP"

Ask for and even demand that you are made aware of your green building options. Hopefully the choices we make today when we build or remodel stay with us for a long time.

**Live green and prosper.**

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