

Sustainable Building Practices

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While continuing to promote local, sustainable initiatives, the Sustainable Greater Green Bay Task Force has identified sustainable home building practices that can help people save money and become more energy efficient. Homes, whether buying existing, remodeling, or building new, represent one of the most personal and significant financial investments you'll ever make. Undoubtedly, with the recent downturn in the economy, we face unpredictable energy and transportation costs, which can influence our home buying decisions.

When buying or renovating a home, sustainability advocates encourage home shoppers to consider some additional evaluation criteria including:

- Use of energy efficient appliances and mechanical systems. Look for the Energy Star Ratings on appliances, furnaces, and water heaters.
- Use water efficient fixtures and appliances. Request Efficiency ratings on toilets, showers, and faucets.
- Evaluate probable maintenance requirements. Minimize landscape watering requirements, regular home repairs, and the on-going costs of home ownership by using durable, low-maintenance materials and landscaping.
- Windows that allow appropriate daylight (not glare) into the house. Homes with windows oriented north and south have greater control over sunlight than those with east and west exposures. Windows that allow summer breezes to flow through your house are also important. Passive solar heating, lighting, and cooling are cost effective solutions to reducing energy costs. The sunlight and the breezes are free.
- Effective landscaping. Coniferous plantings to the north and northwest help block stiff winter breezes and insulate your home. Deciduous trees on the south and west offer cool shade during the summer, and allow the low angle of the winter sun into your house.

Purchasing an existing home is recycling in its most basic form, and simple measures can be implemented to achieve a higher level of sustainability. However, if you are building a new home and want to be more sustainable, use an architect and builder trained or accredited in Green Building construction. A carefully designed and constructed house should presumably be more energy efficient than an existing home.

To help you select a more sustainable home, the Task Force has created a “Green Home Basics” checklist. Each component may be considered for the financial, energy efficiency, or quality of life benefits. The checklist is available at the Green Bay City’s website at www.ci.green-bay.wi.us. Just click on the Sustainable Green Bay tab on the right and follow the link to the “Green Home Basics” checklist.