

## “Green” Homes Can Bring In The Green

You already know “green” is a growing trend in homebuilding right now, but what exactly does that mean? What is a “green” home, anyway? Is it simply using sustainable materials like bamboo flooring or recycled glass tiles, or installing Energy Star™ appliances and energy-efficient light bulbs? And what’s in it for real estate professionals?

The average household spends \$1,500 a year on energy. However, a green-certified building uses 32% less electricity, 26% less natural gas and 35% less energy overall (*U.S. Green Building Council*). As energy prices rise, so do the savings, and in this economy, both buyers and sellers are eager in saving more green by being more “green”.

And while most people agree that the trend is a socially responsible step in the right direction, not all buyers are in a position to build a brand new green home from the ground up, nor will every seller complete major renovations on their existing home going up for sale.

But it’s important to remember that no matter what the age of the home, easy alterations will reduce energy consumption, improve indoor air quality and protect the environment.

**Small, smart changes can pay off big for a seller by increasing the appeal to socially conscious buyers.**

***Be green to make green simply by:***

- **Replacing old appliances.** Encourage sellers to replace appliances more than ten years old with new models that bear the Energy Star™ logo. Energy Star appliances use between 10% - 50% less energy and water, which can translate to hundreds saved annually on energy bills. Same goes for the furnace. Today’s furnaces are 25% more efficient than they were in the 1980’s.
- **Making changes that save water.** Rising water bills make these small changes attractive to buyers. Installing an aerator on all household faucets can decrease the annual water consumption by 50%. Low-flow toilets use only 1.6 gallons per flush versus 3.5 gallons on pre-1994 models.
- **Remodeling green will pay off.** Homeowners are now opting for greener materials like bamboo flooring over typical hardwood or synthetic materials. While they look and wear similarly, bamboo is environmentally friendly due to the high rate at which it replenishes itself. If painting, look for readily-available zero- or low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints, which are free of the toxins, solvents and unhealthy ingredients that are released into the air after the paint is dry, impacting indoor air quality.

While it's true that going green may involve some minimal effort and expense up front, advocates of green living say it's worth it for consumers and for real estate professionals to know the facts. A recent survey by the National Association of Home Builders revealed that 85% of green home owners were more satisfied with their green home than previous traditional houses. The added bonus of lower utility bills doesn't hurt either.

For more on going green, including the home certification process which can mean a higher resale value for your client, visit these resources:

**U.S. Green Building Council** – [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

**Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources** - [www.mass.gov/doer/home.htm](http://www.mass.gov/doer/home.htm)

**Building Green** – [www.buildinggreen.com](http://www.buildinggreen.com)