

WHAT IS A GREEN HOME?

Energy efficiency, health, and comfort all are hallmarks of a green house. Such properties often are called high performance, eco-friendly or energy efficient homes.

Common elements

While some homes are certified as green by housing or environmental industry groups, properties don't necessarily have to carry a label to be considered green.

What all such homes have in common is a desire by its owners to live in a property that incorporates systems and features that lower utility bills, improve health and comfort, and minimize the impact on the planet.

Green upgrades

For existing homes, there's a vast array of strategies for achieving greater efficiency.

They include small, inexpensive upgrades, like installing low-flow water faucets, energy efficient light bulbs, and programmable thermostats.

In addition, less visible elements, such as efficient insulation and air sealing, create a more comfortable, less drafty interior environment.

And bigger, more costly projects--high-efficiency furnaces, solar panels, and triple-pane windows, for example--often provide larger financial and environmental gains.

New homes

Newly constructed homes are being built to high standards that embrace green principles. Many builders now take a scientific, whole-building approach to ensure that a property's design, layout and systems work in concert to create a functional, comfortable setting that addresses environmental concerns.

Seeking green

When you're looking at a home with green features, here's a short checklist of considerations:

-  Energy efficiency in home features like appliances, water faucets, lighting, heating, cooling and water-heating systems.
-  Efficient building envelopes with high-performance windows and well-insulated walls, floors, and attics.
-  Non-toxic building materials and finishes, such as recycled or renewable woods and low- and zero-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints and sealants.
-  A landscape featuring native plants that thrive without chemical fertilizers or excessive watering.
-  Location efficiency, meaning a community where public transportation and the needs of daily life are accessible without a car.

Learn more

Contact a REALTOR® with NAR's Green Designation at GreenREsourceCouncil.org.

Read about green home labels at ENERGY STAR®, EnergyStar.gov.

National Association of Homebuilders, www.NAHB.org.

US Green Building Council, www.USGBC.org.

Connect with experts and get green home questions answered at GreenHomeGuide.com/AskAPro.

