

GREEN HOME Anatomy - How can we make our Homes "GREEN" ?

At the office of EsKay Realty, we offer 360-degree services around any real estate ownership, including many free home care tips. On popular demand from our clients, we have brought this topic today. It is interesting & relevant to today's **GREEN Movement** in Real Estate.

Many of us talk about how to make our existing home or new builder home have some "GREEN" features, but "GREEN Home" covers much bigger & vast spectrum than it sounds. A typical house requires power for heating air & water, air conditioning, & lighting and it's responsible for the emission of 3+ tons of carbon annually, compared with about 1.5 tons for a typical car, according to EPA.

More builders & home owners are trying to be part of this movement out of their concerns of global warming, environment, and the rising energy costs. **GREEN Homes are more durable, energy efficient, and tend to sell faster than traditionally-built houses.**

What does it take to make a home GREEN ? The concept is simple.

- (a) Take few do-able & affordable steps to conserve energy & resources,
- (b) Use environment-friendly materials & renewable energy,
- (c) Reduce waste, and
- (d) Improve your indoor environment.

If you could do only a few things towards these goals above, you know you've made a step forward to making it green. We don't have to spend big bucks, but we can just take only a few items that we can do in a cost effective way, to live in a greener home.

Energy Audit in the home is a good way to start. You may buy a "Kill-A-Watt" (as shown on right), a simple electricity usage monitoring device (that costs about \$25 in amazon.com), and use various appliances one-by-one in your house through this monitor and take an account of what appliance takes how much energy. This will help you to prioritize what area you may like to focus on first.

Roof Coverings, Vents & Skylights (1) : Next time you work on your roof, you may consider a lighter color roof covering which absorbs less heat, and can make house as much as 12% cooler, compared to darker color coverings. Also, you may add one or two skylights on the roof to get natural lights specifically into your dark bathrooms or darker areas where you need to turn on lights during day time otherwise. Adding a few roof vents or solar attic fans reduces attic temperature by 25 degrees.

Roofing Boards, Beams & Joists, Radiant Barriers & Insulation (2) (7) (14) : Use OSBs (Oriented Strand Boards) or pre-assembled engineered wood which, are durable & saves many big trees in its manufacturing. Putting radiant barriers, radiant paint on inner-side of roofing, or adding few inches of more attic insulation material reduces home temperature by several degrees, results in less utility bill.

Domestic Solar Solution: For domestic use, there are different sizes of solar power panels available to be installed on your roof top to power certain section of the home. Many people also use solar cooker that cooks upto 250 degrees.

Add Trees in your Yard (3) (5) (12) : Each Tree in your yard filters 60 lbs. of pollutants from air in a year. Can you imagine? Also use recycled wood products & engineered woods on making your outdoor decks to save many big trees in this world.

An article compiled by
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KILL-A-WATT
 (Simple Energy
 Monitoring Device)



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Article by Saral Kundu, EsKayRealty.com , October 2010.

Windows, Doors, Sidings (15),(16),(13) : Low E-windows & Vinyl door panels are preferred for energy efficiency due to conductivity, compared to metal frames. Most of the energy star compliant home builders now-a-days use this type of windows & doors. Putting insulated plastic sheets on windows from inside the house, or using solar screens saves lots of energy. If you see moisture on windows in between glass panes, the window seals are actually broken and you need to replace it to avoid energy leak. Cost of window replacement, depending on size of windows, ranges from \$55 to \$90 per window pane. Storm doors on front & back door increase insulation to the home. Exterior Vinyl or cement siding helps save energy & keeps house cooler.

Air Conditioner & Ducts : Lower the SEER rating, more energy is required to produce the same cooling effect. Replacement of air conditioner costs a lot, but it saves huge money in long term. Cleaning AC coil on regular basis helps it exchange heat effectively to lower utility bills. The outside AC coil can be cleaned easily by homeowner. Power off the AC and use a water hose from top so that it blows water from inside to outside cleaning the coils. Check the AC ducts & furnace duct insulations regularly. The ducts with sharp bends, squeezed section or loose end joints will restrict the effective air flow. Electronic thermostat saves energy compared to old mercury-based manual ones.

Rain Water Harvesting : You can save rain waters from your gutters in a few inter-connected plastic tanks and it can be used later for watering the garden, lawn or pool.

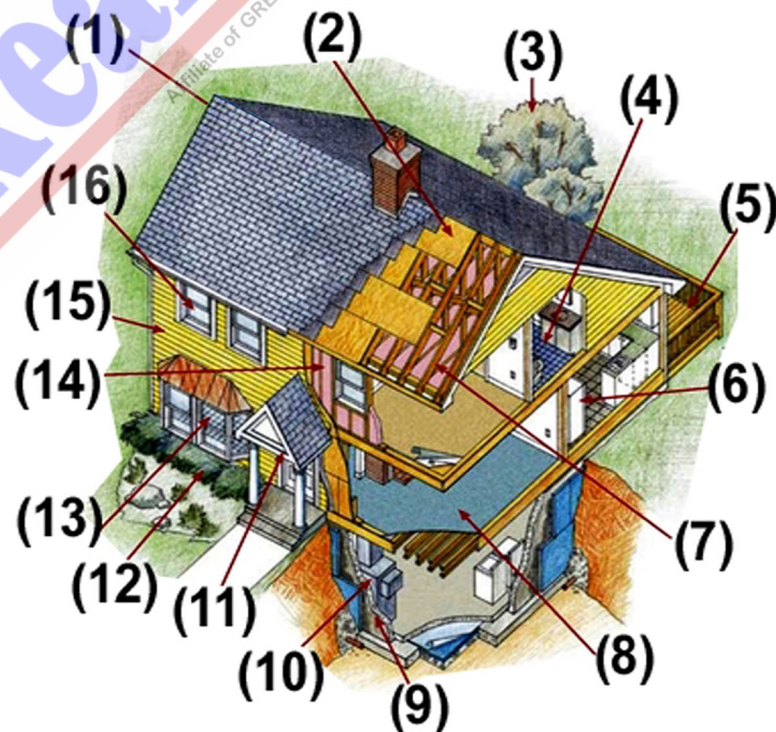


Composting : You might consider to throw all your kitchen organic trash , lawn clippings etc. into a closed chamber and convert into good organic compost to use it in your own garden. Home Depot & Lowe's sell those small domestic composter.



Use Energy STAR Appliance & Lights (6) : One compact florescent light bulb is equivalent to 10 regular bulbs. LED light is equivalent to 100 bulbs & also it doesn't contribute in heat increase in the home. You may consider replacing all halogen & regular bulbs with LED bulbs , as halogen & regular bulbs create a huge thermal spectrum inside the house, causing AC compressor to work hard to cool home. Some use SolaTube to draw natural light inside the house without any energy cost. Outdoor cooking appliance may be used to decrease the dissipated heat inside the home.

WATER HEATER : Make sure you adjust the setting to 'low' while going on vacation. It saves lot of energy. Solar water heaters are becoming popular to save utility bills. It collects warmth from the SUN and then pumps through a coil in the water heater tank. There are some water heaters available in market to heat water using high ambient temp of Garage. Tankless water heaters are also good to save energy, as it instantly heats the water as needed, unlike conventional heaters that keep huge amount of water always hot. Water hazards are more in conventional water heaters.



Insulating Loft, Windows, Corner Plates, External Cracks (11) (9) (10) (8) : Don't forget to check & cover all the external cracks & insulations on a regular basis around the house to avoid energy leaks.

Toilets & Pool Pump (4) : When you're changing toilets, replace it with low consumption dual flush toilets to save 50% of water. Use 2-stage pool pumps that runs longer at half speed saving electricity & life of the pump. If the cost of use of an 1-stage pool pump is typically \$51 per month, it's only about \$19 for a 2-stage pump.

To know many more low-cost project ideas on saving energy, resources & environment, you may logon to our Blogs. We'll be glad to assist you in any ways in your home ownership. Please do just a few things depending on your budget & time, and join this GREEN movement to make this world better place to live. Happy Living !