

Today, the government, businesses, and communities in general are interested in ways that they can reduce pollution and their overall impact on the environment. One of the ways that this is happening is through the development of sustainable buildings. Sustainable building, also commonly referred to as green building, is a method of building in which environmentally friendly practices and resources are used for construction, maintenance and renovation. This ranges from the selection of the building site to the types of materials that are used to build it. Green building techniques also greatly impact the efficiency of a structure's energy usage and can be applied to both non-residential and residential buildings and homes.

In the United States, the current trend in green building began to truly grow in popularity during the 1990s, with Austin, Texas forming the first green building program in 1992 and the formation of the U.S. Green Building Council in 1993. Traditionally, the construction of homes consumes large amounts of natural resources, water and energy. They cause both air and water pollution through waste, noise, and the runoff of storm water. As a result, the construction of homes and buildings has had a harmful effect on both human and animal health. It has also been harmful to the environment in terms of the loss of natural resources and the degradation of the environment.

Green buildings have a more positive effect not only on human health, but also to the environment and on the community in which they are built. Green buildings are designed to use resources, such as water and energy, more efficiently. They use sustainable materials that are local, durable, renewable or recycled. They are also built to reduce air pollution and improve the quality of water by reducing the waste that eventually makes its way into streams. For the community there are a number of benefits that green buildings offer to citizens, businesses, and contractors. These benefits are both economic and social. On an economic level, businesses often see a reduction in long-term operating costs and through certain choices may even improve the productivity of their employees. In addition, green buildings offer employees a healthier workplace and reduce absenteeism. Both businesses and contractors may use green building as a way to increase their customer base. Contractors may focus their business efforts around green building while businesses may make changes such as adding natural lighting, which has been found to improve sales. Socially, the community often experiences a heightened quality of life, a better preserved natural environment, and less stress on the local infrastructure.

Even people who already own a home or business can make improvements using green building standards, products, and materials. Adding recycled insulation, for example is a common and useful green improvement that can be made to an existing home in efforts to improve energy efficiency. Recycled paints, flooring, and carpets are also a few of the available products for home improvement projects. Prior to hiring a contractor, it is important to look for one that is a part of a green building program or who has received certification from an energy efficiency program. This will ensure that the contractor has received the proper training and has the knowledge to make green improvements to the home or building. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) taxpayers in some states may receive federal tax credits for certain types of building projects that are energy-efficient. Tax credits may also be available for homeowners who purchase certain energy-efficient products. For example, solar energy systems may be eligible for a tax credit of 30 percent of the cost when purchased for new or existing homes.

In efforts to improve the environment and human health, and to save money, the expected growth of energy efficiency and sustainable building efforts are to be expected. This is because buildings are guilty of consuming large percentages of natural resources and releasing pollutants in the air. Sustainable building can help by creating less pollution and waste. In addition, green

buildings consume as much as 25 percent less energy than non-sustainable buildings.

Read the following links for more information on sustainable building.

- [EPA: Green Building Basic Information](#)
- [CalRecycle: Sustainable \(Green\) Building - What is a Green Building Product or Material](#)
- [Making Green Building Standard Practice](#)
- [Qualities, Use, and Examples of Sustainable Building Materials \(PDF\)](#)
- [Introduction to Green Building](#)
- [Building Green Today! \(PDF\)](#)
- [TLC Ultimate Guide to Green Building](#)
- [Green Building Benefits](#)
- [Why Go Green? Green Building](#)
- [Environmental Health Watch – Healthy Green Housing](#)
- [City Parrish Planning Commission Information Bulletin: Green Housing \(PDF\)](#)
- [Asthma Regional Council of New England: Green Housing - It's Good for Families and the Environment \(PDF\)](#)
- [Energy Star: Federal Tax Credits for Consumer Energy Efficiency](#)
- [Green Building Facts \(PDF\)](#)
- [Green Buildings an Overview of Progress](#)

By Alan Bernau Jr