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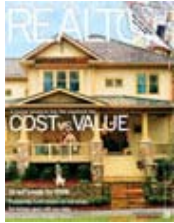
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ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

Sustainability takes root **What's New on the Green Scene**

Consumers' interest in being green has never been so high. We bring you up to date on 15 eco-friendly home trends and must-know terminology so you can serve their needs.

BY BARBARA BALLINGER



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The latest environmentally friendly home features aren't just good for the planet — they look great and are a huge draw for conscientious buyers, too.

From energy-efficient light bulbs to solar-paneled roofs, consumers have gravitated to the idea that they can help the earth by making smarter purchases and lifestyle decisions, even if it's not always cheap or easy. Many of these changes are happening in their homes, thanks also to manufacturers, builders, and architects who are encouraging green products.

What does this mean for you, a real estate practitioner? In order to be in tune with the growing number of prospects who seek a greener lifestyle, you should know about the latest eco-friendly housing trends. You also should be able to understand and explain **the terms** you'll come across as you scout green homes.

What's Made Us So Green?

“Interest in being green has moved across the country — it's no longer just for wacky Californians,” says Matt Golden, who founded Sustainable Spaces Inc. in San Francisco three years ago. The company performs environmental audits on homes, which tests for energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and other factors.

There are plenty of reasons why focusing on the environment has become so popular lately. Some people thank Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Others point to a growing body of green building standards, advocated by groups such as the National Association of Home Builders and

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the U.S. Green Building Council. Another factor, of course, is rising energy prices, which has forced Americans to rethink everyday habits and purchases.

Experts say one thing's clear: The trend isn't limited to one age group, demographic, or geographic area.

"Empty-nester clients like the low energy efficiency, and younger couples gravitate because of environmental concerns and the healthier indoor air quality," says St. Louis builder Matt Belcher, chairman of his local Home Builders Association's Green Building Council.

Consumers Get What They Want

Home builders, retailers, and product manufacturers are seeking to satisfy consumers' appetites for anything green, offering everything from eco-friendly condos to water-saving toilets.

Time Equities Inc.'s 62-story condo-hotel going up at 50 West St. in downtown New York City will have solar panels on the roof, windows that help to keep out the heat, and an energy-efficient HVAC system that will automatically adjust cold or hot air. "We're even building our condo-hotel without a garage to promote public transportation," says Phillip Gesue, Time Equities' director of acquisitions and development.

Belcher predicts that in a few years green construction will become so pervasive that the term "green" won't even be needed. "More manufacturers are building components for the growing market," he says. "It will be a standard practice."

Trends to Know

Whether or not you specialize in selling green homes, you're likely to meet clients who are interested in living a more sustainable lifestyle. Here's a look at the green housing trends you ought to know as you navigate today's market.

- **Copper roofs.** Copper and copper alloys, such as brass and bronze, are showing up on roofs, entryways, facades, gutters, and downspouts. Despite being quite pricey to purchase and install, they're seen as a good long-term investment because they tolerate inclement weather. "A copper roof that's installed properly will last beyond 100 years versus a composition roof that may last only 30 years," says Ken Geremia, manager of communications for the Copper Development Association in New York City. Copper elements also can be completely recycled, so you'll never find them left on a site or plowed under a foundation, says Geremia.
- **Timber framing.** Timber framing requires significantly less lumber than the traditional "stick-built" housing and almost always incorporates superior insulating



panels (SIPS), which keeps heat and air conditioning from escaping the house. There's less waste when large timbers are used, compared with conventional construction that produces sawdust and waste every time a 2-by-4 stud is planed, says Frank Baker, president of Insulspan and Riverbend Framing, part of PFB Corp. in Calgary, Canada. In addition, less energy is needed to power machines and kiln dry wood because timber framing uses freshly cut wood, he says. Timbers are prefabricated and arrive at the building site ready to be assembled, paring construction waste. Costs vary according to finishes selected, just as they do with stick-built housing.

- **Windows that beat the heat.** Low-emittance (Low-E) windows, doors, and skylights offer natural light while blocking the sun's UV rays that heat up the inside of a home, sometimes necessitating air conditioning. The special low-E glazing also stops the sun from fading fabrics, wall coverings, and artwork. When shopping for low-E windows, find out what percentage of rays are blocked by checking the UV label on the glass, advises Rod Clark, product marketing manager for Jeld-Wen Windows and Doors in Klamath Falls, Ore. Most low-E products block 70 percent to 90 percent. Next, examine the glass for clarity. "Most people want glass that's clear rather than with a slight tint or color," he says. Though some manufacturers may tout triple over double glazing, Clark says it's usually more than you'll need.

- **Rainwater holding tanks.**

Capturing rainwater and storm runoff helps reduce the burden on local sewer systems and captures water that can be used in other ways, such as for watering the yard or flushing toilets. In the National Homebuilder [Mainstream GreenHome](#), a 4,000-square-foot demonstration home being completed in Raleigh, N.C., a



rainwater cistern and detention tank system will show that 95 percent of stormwater on a site can be recycled, reused, and absorbed. The rainwater cistern will collect water from the roof and gutters, filter it multiple times, and direct it to indoor plumbing, the laundry, and the sprinkler system. Overflow from the cistern will be funneled into inexpensive detention tanks to be absorbed gradually back into the ground.

- **Chemical-free lighting.** LED lighting (LED stands for light emitting diodes) is a semiconductor that emits light when an electric current is applied. One big advantage: It contains no hazardous chemicals like other lighting does. For instance, compact fluorescents contain mercury and incandescent bulbs have gasses that hurt the ozone layer. In addition, an LED fixture uses 80 percent less energy than a traditional incandescent light bulb and has the ability to last up to 20 years, says Ron Lusk, chairman, president, and CEO of the

Dallas-based Lighting Science Group Corp., the first company to market a high-output, dimmable, Edison-base white-LED light bulb. LED bulbs also provide quality crisp light that shows colors in a natural palette, Lusk says. The downside: the initial cost. A typical 40-watt LED light will run about \$39 while an incandescent light will cost \$4 to \$5, Lusk says. He believes that prices will come down as more businesses and home owners switch, as power companies offer better consumer rebates, and if the government makes the purchase of these energy savers deductible.

- **Green toilets.** Water-conserving toilets can boost your budget while also helping the environment. “Make smart choices in choosing products throughout your house, and you can save 30 percent to 50 percent on your annual water bill,” says Ori Sivan, co-owner of Greenmaker Supply Co. in Chicago, which sells environmentally sensitive building products and materials.



New green toilets conserve water in different ways: low-flow toilets use about 20-percent less water per flush, dual-flush toilets with two buttons give home owners the option of flushing with a half or full tank, and pressure-assist toilets reduce water usage by half and yield a powerful whooshing sound, says Sivan. Toto’s [Aquia dual-flush toilet](#) with a soft-closing seat (pictured at right) costs \$300, comparable with other quality toilets, Sivan says.

- **Solar orientation.** Face a home or an addition in the right direction and build it with the right materials, and you’ll reduce the amount of heat and cold that enter from the outside. That’s what home owners Ross and Tami Bannister did with their new T-shaped farmhouse (pictured at right) in Grapevine, Texas. They wanted the look of a 19th-century structure, but the functions of a modern-day green structure. When completed this September, the 2,300-square-foot house will be [a demonstration project](#) for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Building America program. The Bannister’s farmhouse was built near the back of its lot in a north-south direction to take advantage of prevailing winds that come predominantly from the south. The home has deep porches on the east and west to shade the home from the harsh summer sun. Large pecan trees provide more sun protection. In addition, the roof is insulated with a new DuPont product called AtticWrap — a breathable membrane that creates an airtight seal to reduce air leakage. The house also has low-E windows.

- **Induction cooktops.** Unlike traditional cooktops that heat up the cooking surface, the coils of an induction cooktop release their energy directly to the pot or pan and its contents. That means less energy is diffused in the cooking processes. It also means that the cooktop surface



remains cool to the touch, making it less likely that cooks or kids will burn themselves, says Amir Girgis, managing director of [Diva de Provence](#), a company that first produced induction cooktops for restaurants and has manufactured them for home chefs since 2002. The company's 30-inch and 36-inch cooktops will be joined by a 36-inch induction range this fall. The technology still is more expensive than comparable quality electric and gas appliances, though home owners should see energy bills eventually drop. Cooks also must use pots and pans with a ferrous metal base, says Girgis.

- **Geothermal heating and cooling.** Instead of using a traditional furnace that heats or cools air and emits carbon monoxide during the process, geothermal pumps are filled with water and glycol and rely on the earth as a heat exchanger. In winter, the system sends warm air into rooms; in summer, it brings cool air. Though the initial cost is twice as much as a traditional heating and cooling system, the payback comes five years down the road when you start reaping the benefits of much lower heating and cooling costs, says developer Ron Fleckman, president of Cyrus Homes in Evanston, Ill. His company is building 40 townhouses in Evanston's [Church Street Village](#) development, which uses a geothermal system and other green elements. It is one of the first communities nationwide to test this type of construction. "Because the cost of natural gas is climbing, the payback will be quicker," he says. Home owners can also retrofit an existing house with this system.
- **Attic heat blocker.** [TechShield roofing panels](#), produced by LP Building Products in Nashville, stop the domino effect of inefficient roofing material. Poorly insulated roofing lets radiant heat into the attic, which then spreads throughout a home and requires the owners to turn on the air conditioner. By contrast, TechShield blocks up to 97 percent of the radiant heat, reduces the attic temperature 30 degrees, and cuts energy consumption and carbon gases as a result. "You can cut monthly energy bills by as much as 20 percent," says Rusty Carroll of LP Building Products. The panels are made of a thin layer of aluminum foil laminated to OSB (oriented strand board) roof sheathing, which is made from fast-growing trees, and installed in the attic of new construction. The panels are used in conjunction with insulation rather than as a substitute, Carroll says. He recommends them both for houses in the South and Sunbelt where rays are strongest. A 3,000-square-foot house might cost \$1,000 to \$1,500 to outfit with the panels.
- **Reclaimed wood countertops.** Fast-growing plants like bamboo, and already-cut woods that aren't being used, find new life as gorgeous countertops thanks to entrepreneurs like Ken Williamson, founder of Atlanta-based [The Craft-Art Co.](#) The wood he uses is readily available and comes in many variations of color and texture, from antique heart pine found in shuttered Southern mills and old dilapidated farmhouses, to red oak and Douglas fir just waiting to be recycled from the bottom of pickle vats. To keep the countertops looking their best, Williamson uses a clear, organic tongue-oil varnish.

- **Nontoxic paint.** To keep indoor air clean and cut down on landfill pollutants, many consumers are using paints that don't contain toxic Volatile Organic Components, or VOCs. These paints come in a variety of colors and finishes, and are offered by mainstream paint companies, from [Sherwin Williams](#) to [Benjamin Moore](#). But for a more unique look, check out Italian-made [Oikos paints](#), which come in 26 unusual finishes such as Venetian Stucco, Velvet, and Pearl.
- **Formaldehyde-free insulation.** Building products such as insulation can emit traces of the chemicals they're made with, which pollutes the air inside of homes. That's why manufacturer [Johns Manville](#) in Denver made the decision in 2002 to remove formaldehyde from its building insulation and duct board. By removing the formaldehyde from its plant and manufacturing facility, the staff isn't subject to it, and it also improves the environment around our plant so it helps neighbors, says Scott DeShetler, director of marketing and communications for the company.
- **Smart irrigation systems.** WeatherTRAK controllers automatically adjust watering schedules based on the needs of your landscape and local weather conditions. The system's "brain" receives satellite data with information about local weather conditions. An additional moisture sensor shuts down the system if it starts to rain when the sprinkler is on. Manufactured by [HydroPoint Data Systems Inc.](#) in Petaluma, Calif., the basic model starts at \$500 and prices climb to \$5,000, based on the number of sprinkler heads. Besides better looking lawns, home owners reap lower water bills and contribute to a healthier environment.
- **Green furniture.** When old barns, factories, and farmhouses are torn down, their wood can be salvaged for artistic furniture. Eric Mann, owner of [New England Country Custom Interiors](#) in Clinton, Mass., sells furniture made from materials that would most likely end up in a landfill. Mann also works "green," using solar heat to power machinery to craft his early American furniture reproductions. He also finishes pieces with biodegradable milk paints rather than oil or latex choices. A farm table with a barn-board top measuring 5 feet by 8 feet runs between \$500 and \$1,500.

Green Speak

9 Terms for Your Eco-Friendly Vocabulary

You should never feel out of touch when clients are telling you about their dream green home. That's why we asked Jessica Jensen, co-founder of green home-improvement Web site [Low Impact Living](#), to share some key terms that every real estate practitioner ought to know.

EcoBroker. This real estate certification program helps practitioners become experts in helping consumers and communities use energy efficiency and sustainable design. Through [EcoBroker](#) educational courses,

you acquire knowledge and resources to become a Certified EcoBroker, which gives you a leg up in assisting home owners in purchasing and marketing properties with green features. Classes are available online, and may count as continuing education credits in your state.

FSC-certified wood. A key component of green building is using sustainable wood. Quickly renewable woods like bamboo are inherently sustainable. In selecting other types of hardwoods, it's important that the wood be grown and harvested in a sustainable manner. The [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) maintains standards and certifies woods for sustainability.

Geothermal. Geothermal power uses heat from the earth to generate electricity. This is a clean, renewable power source. Geothermal energy is harnessed with a Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) to tap the stored energy beneath the planet's surface. These pumps can be used to provide heating, cooling, and hot water for residential and commercial buildings.

LEED. LEED is an abbreviation for [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design](#). The LEED rating system was designed by the U.S. Green Building Council and is the standard for the design, construction, and operation of green buildings. LEED started in the commercial building sector, and a rating system for residential construction is in the works. Architects and builders often refer to themselves as LEED AP; the AP stands for Accredited Professional. This means they have passed the LEED exam and are well-versed in the program's standards.




Native landscaping. Selecting plants indigenous to your area means they're better adapted to the local climate, use appropriate amounts of water, resist local pests, and provide food for area wildlife.

Runoff. The waste water that flows from our gardens, lawns, driveways, and streets into our sewer systems carries various pollutants, including fertilizers and pesticides from our yards. The water eventually travels into rivers and oceans where they degrade water quality for humans and animals. To reduce runoff, home owners can make sure they don't over-water their lawns or accidentally water their sidewalks and driveways. Permeable stone pavers in driveways also help curb runoff.

Solar PV/ Solar Water Heaters. Solar PV stands for Solar Photovoltaic, which are the panels used to create electricity. PV cells are comprised of semi-conductors, most often made of silicon, which convert sun power into electricity. These are different from (and more expensive than) solar water-heating systems. A solar water-heating system is fairly simple with the solar panels typically installed on a roof. The sun then heats the panels; the solar collectors heat a fluid in pipes held in the interior of the panel boxes, and the fluid is transported into the house where it heats water in a storage tank.

Sustainable/Sustainability. Sustainability refers to meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This involves using, re-using, and conserving natural resources to do the least harm to the natural environment. It's now used almost interchangeably with "green" and "eco-friendly."

VOC. An abbreviation for Volatile Organic Compounds, VOCs are emitted as gases from various solids and liquids like wall paint, furniture, and household cleaning supplies. Many chemicals are harmful to human health; some are carcinogenic. But no- or low-VOC products now available represent good non-toxic replacements.

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