

What is Green Building?

Green Building is a “Whole-Systems” approach. It is the use of design and construction practices that produce buildings that are generally higher quality, healthier for people and the environment, less costly to maintain, consume fewer natural resources and generate less waste than conventional buildings. More specifically, green building practices:

- Increase a building’s durability and ease of maintenance
- Reduce energy and water consumption
- Improve efficient use and recycling of materials, which means that much less solid waste is generated during construction
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants associated with building materials and energy required for heating and cooling
- Improve indoor air quality and health for building occupants
- Better integrate buildings and developments with existing and planned local and regional infrastructures, such as transportation, schools, parks, natural features, and so forth
- Increase long-term property values.

There are many different ways to design and construct green buildings. New research data, understandings, strategies and technologies are appearing almost daily in the green building field. For these reasons, applying an integrated design process that involves many of the key players (owners/occupants, architect, builder, and key subcontractors) early on in the design process is the best way to ensure optimal results.

Why build green?

Green Buildings can save money on energy, water operation and maintenance costs. Green buildings often enhance residential health and result in greater worker productivity through improved air quality and day lighting.

Why is Green Building important to you?

As the world's population continues to increase, more demands are placed on the earth's natural resources to provide those materials necessary for building construction. Natural resources are limited, the costs to extract them are great, and this use of resources has a negative impact on the environment. In the United States alone, buildings account for:

- 39% of total energy use
- 12% of total water consumption
- 68% of total electricity consumption
- 38% of total carbon dioxide emissions

[US environmental Protection Agency, December 2004, *Buildings and the Environment: A Statistical Summary*]

Is it more expensive to build green?

The increase cost of building green is can be as low as 3-5% depending on design features, building types and location. In some projects, where green measures are considered early and fully integrated into the design, there is little increased cost.

For more information, check out these additional sources:

- US Green Building Council www.usgbc.org
- Build it Green www.builditgreen.org
- For energy saving tips and possible rebates from PG&E, visit their web site at www.pge.com.