

# BUYER'S GUIDE

**SUGGESTED PRIORITIES FOR  
INCORPORATING ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESPONSIBILITY INTO YOUR HOME**



Green Built Home™ is a voluntary green building initiative that reviews and certifies homes that meet sustainable building and energy standards.



WISCONSIN  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
INITIATIVE

Green Built Home is implemented in partnership with the Madison Area Builders Association in cooperation with other participating builders associations, leading utilities and organizations that promote green building.

[www.greenbuilthome.org](http://www.greenbuilthome.org)

[www.wi-ei.org](http://www.wi-ei.org)



## There's no place like a Green Built Home!

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**B**uilding or buying a home is the single largest purchase most people make and requires countless decisions. Shouldn't the choices you make help save you money, improve your family's health, safety, and comfort and protect our natural resources?

Green Built Home certification helps ensure that your home will have reduced energy and maintenance costs, better indoor air quality, improved health, safety and comfort, reduced environmental impact, and market distinction for future resale.

It takes time, however, to research the latest green building design, technology and materials, and deciding which measures are most important can be a difficult task. Green Built Home provides this priority ranking of measures to reduce the negative impacts of homebuilding to you, your family, and the environment.

### Where to begin?

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- Look for the Green Built Home logo in new or existing homes
- Choose a builder that participates in the Green Built Home program
- Ask your builder or Realtor® about Green Built Home
- Select products that meet the criteria of the Green Built Home Checklist
- See [www.greenbuilthome.org](http://www.greenbuilthome.org) for more information and resources

This list reflects our sense of where you might get the most positive impact for the money spent. Each item is followed by a few sample strategies you or your builder can use to make your home a Green Built Home.

## 1. Save more than just money

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The energy generated to power the typical single-family home results in the production of 26,028 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> and costs the home owner approximately \$1400 a year<sup>1</sup>

Reducing the amount of energy your home uses will save you a lot of money and will also dramatically affect the environment. Green Built Homes are at least 15% more energy efficient than required by code because they integrate efficient design, high levels of insulation, high performance windows, air tightness, and energy efficient mechanical equipment, lighting, and appliances.

### Notes

1. U.S. Energy Information Administration, Household Energy Consumption and Expenditures 1993, and Rocky Mountain Institute calculations (1999).
2. November 2, 2000 press release, American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.
3. 1999 Residential Water Use Summary, American Water Works Association.
4. WasteCap Wisconsin, Construction and Demolition Debris, Briefing Paper: Reducing, Reusing and Recycling.

Make sure your new home has the following high performance features:

- Properly installed insulation and thorough air sealing
- High efficiency appliances/furnace/air conditioner/ water heater
- ENERGY STAR® labeled windows and light fixtures
- Landscaping that will shade the southern and western exposure of a home during the summer
- Home orientation that maximize solar heat gain during the winter

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist for 60 more ideas**

## 2. Provide a safe and comfortable home environment

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The average American spends more than 90% of his/her time indoors<sup>2</sup>

Discussions about green building usually focus on the impacts of homes on the natural, outdoor environment--what about the environment inside a home? When you consider the amount of time people spend indoors, the importance of indoor air quality becomes apparent.

Make sure your new home has the following healthy features:

- Proper, controlled ventilation
- Sealed combustion, direct vent combustion appliances
- Air cleaners that remove allergens and irritants from HVAC systems
- Hard surface flooring surfaces that are easy to clean
- Building materials that are non-toxic and formaldehyde free

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist for 25 more ideas**

## 3. Protect Wisconsin's lakes and rivers

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With the development of urban and suburban areas comes the introduction of impervious surfaces (roads, driveways, roofs, etc.) The runoff generated by these surfaces often collects pollutants such as oil, fertilizer and bacteria on its way to the storm sewer, which generally channels it directly into a waterway without filtration or treatment. In addition, erosion can occur wherever bare, exposed soil is present.

Make sure your new home has the following runoff management features:

- Permeable surfaces or stormwater infiltration systems
- Rainwater collection system
- Protected existing natural features that will hold soil and save money on landscaping

- Native plantings such as raingardens that will help increase infiltration, are low maintenance, and promote stewardship of natural history

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist for 19 more ideas**

## 4. Think outside the box

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According to the Worldwatch Institute, the average American adult spends an average of 72 minutes a day behind the wheel of an automobile.

The impacts of your home are not confined within the four walls of your home. Choosing the location of your home presents another opportunity to benefit both the environment and your quality of life and can save you time, money and reduce air pollution. If possible, consider a home built in an existing neighborhood or on an infill lot.

Make sure your new home offers the following:

- Shopping, offices, schools, and recreation within walking or biking distance
- Access to mass transit routes or bike paths

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist for 8 more ideas**

## 5. Be water wise

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If all US households installed water-saving features, water use would decrease by 30%, resulting in a savings of \$11.3 million per day<sup>3</sup>

Wisconsin is blessed with thousands of streams, lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water including two Great Lakes. However, population growth and industrial development is increasingly creating conflict over these seemingly limitless natural resources.

Make sure your new home has the following water wise features:

- Low flow faucets and showerheads
- Efficient clothes washer and dishwasher

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist for 5 more ideas**

## 6. Waste not, want not

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Wisconsin generates approximately 1 million tons of construction and demolition debris each year<sup>4</sup>

While a sizeable portion of this debris such as cardboard, lumber, and drywall could be recycled, much of it is sent directly to the landfill. In the case of cardboard, this conflicts with state law. The more materials that are recycled the less demand there is for new raw materials to be extracted, processed, manufactured, and shipped.

Make sure your new home provides the following opportunities for waste reduction and recycling:

- Job site recycling plan posted and followed
- Suppliers who use reusable packing materials

- Committed efforts to recycle construction waste
- Recycled or salvaged building materials
- Kitchen or garage recycling center

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist for 6 more ideas**

## 7. Size matters

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According to the US Census Bureau, the size of the average home has grown by 105% in the last 50 years (from 1100 sq ft in 1950 to 2250 sq ft in 1999.)

Larger homes utilize more resources than smaller homes — they have larger structures that must be framed, insulated, sided, roofed, heated and lit. You are the best judge of your living space needs. However, when looking at or designing floor plans, give careful thought to how you use your living space and how traffic flows through your home. A well thought-out floor plan will result in more efficient use of space. Money saved by building a smaller house can always be used to make upgrades in flooring, HVAC systems, fixtures and other amenities.

**Ask your builder or Realtor®**

## 8. A good green product is (not) hard to find

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Most green building materials are neither difficult to find, nor more expensive than conventional building materials. In many cases, these materials are available at your local hardware store, lumberyard or large home center chains.

Make sure your new home includes the following categories of green building materials:

- **Recycled-content** — a portion of product (or the entire product) is made with materials that might otherwise be bound for the landfill (i.e. carpet made from recycled milk jugs and soda bottles.)
- **Durable** — the product will last longer, require less maintenance and save you money.
- **Made with renewable resources** — the resource from which the material is made can be readily replenished (i.e. bamboo, used for flooring, which can be harvested every 3-6 years.)
- **Resource efficient** — the product was designed to use fewer materials more efficiently, yet perform as well or better than standard products (i.e. engineered lumber, made from small-diameter lumber resulting in a product stronger than standard wood.)
- **Healthier** — the products are non-toxic or have reduced chemical content compared to other products (i.e. formaldehyde-free insulation, low VOC paints and finishes.)
- **Locally-produced materials** — long-distance transport of building materials can be very energy intensive.

It is important to note that not all green building materials fall into all these categories. There are often tradeoffs in choosing one material over the other, and there is no one "right" choice for everyone. The right choice for you is the choice that fits your budget/design/aesthetics.

Green building materials are an emerging market, and there are many companies developing labeling schemes that claim their product is green. Some labels are more meaningful than others, so it is important to do a little research on whatever materials you choose. Look for labels from neutral, third-party certification organizations — organizations that exist to verify the environmental claims of companies and their products. An example of a third-party, neutral certification organization is the Forest Stewardship Council, which verifies responsible forest management practices.

**Ask your builder, Realtor®, or product supplier  
See the Green Built Home Checklist for more ideas**

## 9. Green-it-yourself (GIY)

In addition to building or buying a Green Built Home, you can practice resource efficient living in your own home and serve as a model for others in the community.

Make sure your lifestyle minimizes the environmental impacts of owning a home:

- Minimize or eliminate the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- Select, operate, and maintain appliances, equipment, and lighting to reduce energy and water consumption
- Incorporate environmental responsibility into purchasing decisions
- Work with neighbors and community members to encourage sustainable living

**Ask yourself**

**See the Green Built Home Checklist and Web site for more ideas**

## 10. Ask Your Builder, Realtor®, or product supplier

Markets respond to consumer demand. If homeowners request Green Built Homes, builders will build them, Realtor's® will sell them, and retailers will make green building products more available. Green Built Home will work with any builder to develop a set of features that fit their customer's requirements and budget and their current building practices. There are many builders throughout Wisconsin that are already using green techniques and materials. Ask questions. Make demands. Don't accept the typical way of doing things if you want something different--it's your money that's being spent.

## Resources on the Web include:

- Checklist
  - Buyers Guide
  - Brochure
  - Product Directory
  - Waterfront Property Checklist
  - List of participating builders
- And more....

**[www.greenbuilthome.org](http://www.greenbuilthome.org)**



The printing of the Green Built Home Buyer's Guide is funded by Madison Gas & Electric.

Design and production donated by Hoot Communications.

Support for the Green Built Home Buyers Guide is provided by



**THE HOME DEPOT FOUNDATION**

**Building Better Communities**



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