

Going Green

Hardly a day goes by when the word “green” does not appear in the media: a presidential candidate touting green energy, a celebrity toting a green manufactured handbag, or a business talking about greening their practices with carbon offsets. The Green Era has arrived. But what does “green” really mean? And how does it affect building design, construction, and remodeling?

Simple Concept

Green building is simple concept – design buildings and use land to save energy and reduce waste. The City of West Hollywood started the Green Building Program to do just that – save energy and reduce waste. In doing so, residents and businesses will have lower utility bills and improved air quality. Based on a simple point system, architects and developers incorporate green design standards into their building plans. These features will add longevity and durability to the building, improve energy and water efficiency, and reduce the amount of waste that is created through construction and annual building maintenance and operations.

Design Standards

As of October 1, 2007, the City of West Hollywood mandates that all new projects of three or more units include green building standards as part of their plans for the design, construction, and renovation of buildings. Each project must receive 60 of 160 points for approval. High performing projects of 90 points are eligible to receive incentives.

The West Hollywood Green Building Program is not the only set of standards by which to build green. Many private buildings have gravitated towards “LEED Certification.” LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification is based on a set of design and construction standards developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). Buildings that meet LEED standards are exempt from the West Hollywood Green Building Point System.

The benefits of green building are far reaching and long lasting. They include:

Cost Savings

- Up-front investments in green designs and technology can yield financial paybacks over the life of the building through lower utility bills and reduced operating and maintenance costs.

Ecological Benefit

- Green buildings are more resource efficient, minimize waste, and reduce the amount of materials ending up in landfills. Also, for every gallon of water or kilowatt-hour of electricity you save, you reduce the amount of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere.

Health

- Levels of air pollution inside homes and businesses can be 2-5 times higher than outdoor levels. Using low/non-toxic materials and good ventilation techniques can help to prevent problems like molds, allergens and poor air quality.

Beauty and Comfort

- Natural materials, high quality lighting, and good design details make for pleasing spaces. Your home or business can be a refuge from the hectic—and polluted—world outside.

Added Value

- Green buildings are marketable to a larger population. Green elements also represent value: 80% of homebuyers say new homes don't meet their environmental expectations, and 96% said they are willing to pay more for a home with green features.

Resources

West Hollywood has started a Green Building Resource Center in City Hall where citizens can look at green products and gather information on green design. The resource center will provide citizens with a green building manual, outlining the point system and implementation, as well as educational brochures on the principles and features of green design. Additionally, citizens can pick up a list of local sustainable product vendors. These materials are available on the web at www.weho.org/greenbuilding.