

Green architecture, or green design, is an approach to building that minimizes the harmful effects of construction projects on human health and the environment. The "green" architect or designer attempts to safeguard air, water, and earth by choosing *eco-friendly* building materials and construction practices.

Building a greener home is a choice—at least it is in most communities. "Typically, buildings are designed to meet building code requirements," the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has reminded us, "whereas green building design challenges designers to go beyond the codes to improve overall building performance and minimize life-cycle environmental impact and cost." Until local, state, and federal public officials are persuaded to legislate green processes and standards—just like building and fire prevention practices have been codified—much of what we call "green building practices" is up to the individual property owner. When the property owner is the U.S. General Services Administration, results can be as unexpected as the complex built in 2013 for the U.S. Coast Guard.

Common Characteristics of a "Green" Building

The highest goal of green architecture is to be fully sustainable. Simply put, people do "green" things in order to achieve sustainability. Some architecture, like Glenn Murcutt's 1984 Magney House, has been an experiment in green design for years. While most green buildings do not have all of the following features, green architecture and design may include:

- Ventilation systems designed for efficient heating and cooling
- Energy-efficient lighting and appliances (e.g., ENERGY STAR® products)
- Water-saving plumbing fixtures
- Landscaping with native vegetation and planned to maximize passive solar energy
- Minimal harm to the natural habitat
- Alternative renewable energy power sources such as solar power or wind power
- Non-synthetic, non-toxic materials used inside and out
- Locally-obtained woods and stone, eliminating long-haul transportation
- Responsibly-harvested woods
- Adaptive reuse of older buildings
- Use of recycled architectural salvage
- Efficient use of space
- Optimal location on the land, maximizing sunlight, winds, and natural sheltering
- Rainwater harvesting and greywater reuse