



Green Building FAQs from the Green Home Builders of the Triangle (GHBT)

- 1. What is a green home?** A green home consumes less energy, uses fewer resources, has better indoor environmental quality, is more durable, and requires less maintenance than a standard home. A green home is built according to a systems approach that addresses all aspects of green building (lot design and preparation, energy efficiency, water efficiency, resource use, indoor environmental quality, and homeowner education).
- 2. Are solar panels required for a home to be green?** Solar panels are not required for a home to be green, although they may indeed be a valuable component of a green home. Consult a professional to determine if solar panels would be an appropriate and cost-effective feature to include on a particular home.
- 3. Does green building make a difference?** Buildings in America produce about 40% of our greenhouse gases. The construction of more energy efficient homes – which will save energy every year for their entire lifespan – presents the opportunity to make a significant, positive environmental impact.
- 4. Isn't green building expensive?** Green building does not have to be prohibitively expensive. Entry level and affordable homes have been certified in the GHBT program. The key is to select the green features that will provide the most benefit, according to the needs and budget of the owner. While the initial building cost of a green home might be higher, the monthly operating cost is less (depending on occupant behavior). As a result, green building is likely to be a more cost-effective approach.
- 5. How can I tell if a home is green?** The best way to be sure a home is green is to ask for its certificate from an established green building program like GHBT. Most green building programs (and also ENERGY STAR®) provide a sticker for the home's breaker box in addition to a paper certificate.
- 6. What are the differences between the green building certification programs?** The programs are all very similar, because they all employ a scoring system that requires a builder to meet standards in all green building program areas. The programs differ some in their standards, levels, procedures, and costs. The programs operating in this area include: GHBT, NC HealthyBuilt Homes, LEED-H, and NAHBGreen. The GHBT program has four certification levels and is based on the National Green Building Standard issued by the American National Standards Institute on January 29, 2009.
- 7. How do I find and buy a green home?** Ask your REALTOR® to run a search for certified green homes. The Triangle Multiple Listing Service now contains a checkbox for green certified and ENERGY STAR® certified homes.
- 8. How do I find professionals who can design and build green homes?** Contact the Home Builders Associations for a list of builders who are GHBT members. You can also check the gallery of certified homes at our website (www.GreenHomeBuildersoftheTriangle) to see which members have certified homes in our program.
- 9. What is third-party verification?** The GHBT program requires an independent third party (i.e., an approved verifier) to check the builder's work – in the form of testing, inspections, and document review – before a certificate is issued.

10. Who are the verifiers? Verifiers are trained professionals who have achieved the prerequisites and have passed the tests needed to qualify as a GHBT-approved verifier. Verifiers have specialized training in building science, energy efficiency, and green building systems.

11. What makes a product green? Products are often considered green if they are nontoxic, renewable, energy efficient, recyclable and/or contain low embodied energy. The combination and balance between these qualities determines how green a product is. Embodied energy is a measure of the amount of resources needed to produce and transport a product. For example, locally-produced, old-growth oak might contain lower embodied energy than rapidly-renewable bamboo transported from China.

12. Can I remodel my house and get it certified as being green? Remodeling a home can save energy, money, and resources. Certain remodeling jobs can be certified under the new National Green Building Standard released by the American National Standards Institute on January 29, 2009.

13. Will replacing my windows make my house green? This step alone won't make your house green. Consult a professional to determine the best way to increase your home's energy efficiency and improve the indoor environmental quality. He or she may suggest first sealing air leaks in your home, increasing your insulation, replacing old appliances, and wrapping your water heater, among other possible energy-saving steps.

14. What are 5 things I can do to save water? You might want to consult a professional to determine the best steps to take. Here are some options:

1. Replace your old toilets (which may use more than 3 gallons per flush) with newer, low-flow or dual-flush, WaterSense-labeled toilets.
2. Replace shower heads with low-flow fixtures and add flow-reducing aerators to faucets.
3. Install a rain barrel and use the water collected for your landscaping needs.
4. Turn off your faucets when brushing your teeth instead of letting the water run.
5. Wash your dishes in your dishwasher instead of your sink, and run it only when you have a full load.

15. What are 5 things I can do for better indoor air quality? You might want to consult a professional to determine the best steps to take in your particular situation. Here are some options:

1. Change your air filters frequently and schedule regular maintenance of your HVAC system so that it operates properly.
2. Choose paints, adhesives, and finishes that do not emit Volatile Organic Compounds.
3. Add exhaust fans to your bathrooms to remove excess moisture generated during showers.
4. Choose low-nap, Green-label carpets or hard floors such as wood or tile.
5. Vent your kitchen hood to the outside to remove excess moisture and toxins.

16. What are 5 things I can do to save energy? You might want to consult a professional to determine the best steps to take. Here are some options:

1. Replace your old appliances and HVAC system with newer, ENERGY STAR® models.
2. Replace your incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) or Light-Emitting Diodes (LEDs).
3. Plug your electronic devices into power strips and turn them off when not in use.
4. Wrap your water heater with an insulating blanket.
5. Place an insulated tent above your attic stairs to act as an air barrier.

Do you have other questions? Contact us at 919-493-8899 or visit our website: www.GreenHomeBuildersoftheTriangle.com.