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To go green

Architects are starting to design buildings that are environmentally sensitive to both the planet and the homeowner. Considering sustainability in concept and construction will ensure your investment lasts a long time, limits its consumption and saves you money through efficient design.

Green Architecture is the practice of increasing the efficiency with which buildings use resources such as energy, and water, while reducing building impacts on human health and the environment during the building's life cycle, through better site planning and development of your project, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and removal.

Green buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment by: Efficiently using energy, water, and other resources.

Effective green building design and construction can lead to

1) *reduced operating costs* by increasing productivity and using less energy and water
2) *improved public and occupant health* due to improved indoor air quality

Buildings account for a large amount of land use, energy and water consumption, and air and atmosphere alteration. In the United States, more than 2,000,000 acres of open space, wildlife habitat, and wetlands are developed each year.

Buildings used 40 percent of the total energy consumed in the US. In the US, 54 percent of that percentage was consumed by residential buildings and 46 percent by commercial buildings.

Buildings used approximately 68 percent of the total electricity consumed in the United States with 51 percent for residential use and 49 percent for commercial use.

38 percent of the total amount of carbon dioxide in the United States can be attributed to buildings, 21 percent from homes and 17.5 percent from commercial uses. Buildings account for 12.2 percent of the total amount of water consumed per day in the United States.

Energy Conservation Insulate your walls and ceilings. This can save 20 to 30 percent of home heating bills.

Modernize your windows. Replacing all your ordinary windows with argon filled, double-glazed windows.

Plant shade trees and paint your house a light color if you live in a warm climate, or a dark color if you live in a cold climate.

Weatherize your home or apartment, using caulk and weather stripping to plug air leaks around doors and windows. Caulking costs less than $1 per window, and weather stripping is under $10 per door.

Turn your refrigerator down. Refrigerators account for about 20% of Household electricity use. Use a thermometer to set your refrigerator temperature as close to 37 degrees and your freezer as close to 3 degrees as possible.

Set your clothes washer to the warm or cold water setting, not hot.

Make sure your dishwasher is full when you run it and use the energy saving setting. Not using heat in the drying cycle can save 20 percent of your dishwasher's total electricity use.

Turn down your water heater thermostat. Thermostats are often set to 140 degrees when 120 is usually fine.

Select the most energy-efficient models when you replace your old appliances. Look for the Energy Star Label. Buy the product that is sized to your typical needs - not the biggest one available. Front loading washing machines will usually cut hot water use by 60 to 70% compared to typical machines.

Be careful not to overheat or over cool rooms. In the winter, set your thermostat at 68 degrees in daytime, and 60 degrees at night. In the summer, keep it at 78.

Clean or replace air filters as recommended. Cleaning a dirty air conditioner filter can save 5 percent of the energy used.

Buy energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs for your most-used lights.

For a more comprehensive energy saving analysis or to discuss your current or proposed project in more detail we encourage you to contact our office.

The design staff at Paul H. Dobiecki, Architect PLLC is committed to doing our part in protecting the environment by using sound green Architectural practices in all of our project.