



Go Green and Save Green

According to the National Association of Realtors, Americans spend roughly \$160 billion per year to remodel their homes, whether to add storage, update outdated appliances and features, expand their living space, or simply add a personal touch. Rising energy costs and other environmental concerns are motivating an increasing number of these remodelers to consider green technology, and builders, vendors, and other contractors are supporting this trend by offering everything from environmentally-friendly building materials, to energy-efficient appliances like double- (or even triple-) paned windows, and tankless water heaters.

Despite nearly industry-wide support for a move toward green building and remodeling, many homeowners still have concerns about embracing an environmentally friendly lifestyle, either because they fear the cost, or they are reluctant to lose an existing cachet of luxury. The following, then, are some major benefits of a green remodel.

Cost

While the obvious savings in going green has to do with the lower utility bills you will be paying once you switch to energy efficient appliances, there are also rebates and tax credits that may apply. For the most current information on state and federal tax credits, visit <http://www.dsireusa.org/>.

In addition, many vendors of energy efficient appliances - everything from refrigerators to computer monitors - tagged with the "energy star" label, offer rebates for consumers who purchase new appliances, or replace their old ones.

Health

In addition to a cost benefit, green construction methods can improve the overall health of those who live or work in buildings so designed. As an example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that poor air quality indoors is among the five most urgent public health risks in the United States. Building materials low in VOCs (volatile organic compounds) reduces the likelihood of childhood asthma, allergies, and other respiratory conditions.

Environment

While tax deductions and health benefits are wonderful reasons to go green with your remodel, the positive environmental impact is really the where the largest benefits lie. In addition to the fact that green products – everything from tankless water heaters to certain kinds of insulation and wall board – are made from recycled and recyclable materials they also help conserve energy and natural resources. Tankless water heaters will eventually reduce landfill loads by roughly 600 million pounds over a ten-year period, and every kilowatt-hour of electricity or gallon of water saved helps reduce the amount of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere.

With improvements to health and the environment, lower energy bills, and the possibility of tax deductions, is there any reason not to go green when you remodel?