



# Why Green Remodeling Is Important

Remodeling a home green is easier than you may think. Green remodeling gives homeowners the unique opportunity to incorporate cost-saving and earth-sustaining green concepts into their homes. NARI's approach to teaching Green Remodeling is an all-encompassing approach that emphasizes making a home healthy, comfortable, and efficient. Consideration is given to indoor air quality, energy conservation, resource conservation, reduced material waste, and the use of products that are better for the environment (and for people).

## **The case for green remodeling**

It's easier on the earth, it can lower energy costs, and it provides a healthier home in which to live. According to the Sustainable Building Industry Council (SBIC), housing alone consumes 20% of America's energy. Homeowners who choose to remodel green can lower their energy consumption by 30-50%. It's widely agreed that forests produce 40% of Earth's oxygen, and that building supplies use 25% of its forests. Remodeling green by incorporating recycled materials or sustainable species will help homeowners to tread more lightly on Earth's natural resources. More than 15 million Americans are estimated to have asthma, and more than 28 million Americans suffer from hay fever and other allergies, all of which are aggravated by poor indoor air quality, which can be improved by remodeling green.

## **Benefits of green remodeling**

Green remodeling reduces operating costs in the home by increasing efficiency, conserving natural resources, increasing the value of the home, improving indoor air quality and in turn, overall health; reducing waste, reducing emissions costs, and increasing productivity of occupants, and improving quality of life.

Energy conservation is one facet. The average home today utilizes systems for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and most homes are not built as efficiently as they could be, all of which results in high energy consumption. The U.S. Department of Energy believes if current buildings were green-improved, they would use \$20 billion less energy per year. Green remodeling puts a strong emphasis on making homes as efficient as possible with modifications like energy efficient appliances and thermostats that can be programmed at different temperatures for different times of the day.

Indoor air quality is another facet. There are many sources that contribute to the air quality inside a home. They include pollutants brought in from the outside, toxic chemicals existing inside the home, and the activities of the occupants that create pollutants. Major contributors are tobacco smoke, smoke from the burning of wood, coal, kerosene or other such substances, toxic fumes from sealants or chemicals from cleaning products, lead paint, asbestos from insulation, damp carpets or fabrics, and certain pressed-wood furniture products that release chemicals into

the air. Green remodeling seeks to remedy these problems with things like better ventilation systems and using wood, paint, and sealants that are nontoxic.

Reduced material waste and resource conservation is yet another aspect to green remodeling. When remodeling a home, there is often a large amount of construction waste. This amounts to 136 million tons of waste annually, according to the EPA, which in turn makes up 20% of the waste in landfills. Green remodeling focuses on reducing this waste during remodeling and reusing materials whenever possible, as 85 to 90% of materials thrown out can be recycled. Using local materials, building with engineered lumber, and using recycling companies to remove waste are all ways this can be achieved during remodeling.

Use of environmentally safe products is another facet of green remodeling. Many products and practices used in the remodel of a home have negative effects on the environment. From chemicals and materials that pollute the air to the disturbing of the surrounding landscape, a myriad of actions taken can cause harm. With green, care is given to minimizing or eliminating products that could cause harm to the environment or the occupants during remodeling or after.

### **Ways to go green**

Green remodeling can be done in small ways and doesn't necessarily have to encompass the entire home. It's easy to pick and choose elements that fit each particular homeowner. The following can be used:

- Non-toxic paints and sealants
- Programmable thermostats
- Energy efficient appliances
- Natural flooring
- Local building materials
- Natural fiber rugs and fabrics
- Recycled material roof shingles and tiles
- Energy efficient lighting
- Insulated hot water pipes
- Tankless water heaters