



# Going Green – General Information<sup>1</sup>

**The scope of this piece is limited to design and construction.**

**What is “green”?** The emerging trend that has everyone going green reflects a newfound awareness of the impact of our daily activities on the planet. Constructing or remodeling buildings with eco-friendly materials and processes is an important way to reduce this impact. Sustainability is a key “green” concept that encompasses energy and water efficiency, renewable energy sources, local sourcing of materials, use of recycled materials, and durability of buildings and materials. Such “green” choices are healthier both for the environment and its inhabitants.

**“Green” Myths and Mistakes** - Many myths about going “green” have left consumers with questions and mixed feelings about the concept. Consumers have found that some “green” claims are more talk than action and some create more environmental waste than savings (these problems are called “greenwashing”). This fact sheet will explore some of the myths and questions.

**•Myth: If it says “green” on the label, it must be good for the environment.** Right now, there are few requirements for products to pass a test or manufacturers to disclose ingredients or parts that confirm the product is “green.” Buyers should check for state, local, or federal requirements and carefully review product literature and become familiar with some of the industry standards that are used for labeling products as “green.” Since some label standards may be more stringent than others, a buyer should plan to do his or her research or seek out companies that offer detailed information to consumers. There are helpful organizations for this research, and two examples are *Green Building Supply*, which offers full ingredient lists and safe, non-toxic “green” products as well as *BuildngGreen.com*, which employs research staff to provide lists and reviews of products that are important to consumers.

**•Myth: Building “green” is much more expensive than traditional building methods.** Although “green” products and designs may initially cost more, experienced “green” builders and contractors know that building “green” from

start to finish leads to a higher quality product with fewer call-back problems. One key aspect of “green” building is ensuring energy and water efficiency. The savings from implementing certain efficiency specifications can eventually offset a consumer’s initial investment and offer security from future increases in water or energy prices.

**•Myth: “Green” building is a relatively new idea and not as advanced as conventional building methods.** In fact, the concepts used for “green” building are not new at all. Many of these concepts, such as building orientation relative to the sun, have been around for millennia. Current environmental concerns have led to the development of standards for “green” building which have created a larger market for products that have one or more environmental benefits. Today, it is easier to find products to build an environmentally sensitive building than at any time in recent history. Compared to conventional building methods, building “green” is more cost-effective, more health-conscious, and better for the environment.

**“Green” Building vs. “Green” Energy** - “Green” building focuses on the design, location, renovation, construction, materials, operation, and deconstruction of buildings. “Green” energy is not as comprehensive and focuses on energy specifics such as electricity, heating, and cogeneration or combined heat and energy. “Green” energy can be described as the use of energy from sources that are environmentally friendly, non-polluting, and which leave little or no footprint on the environment. Renewable energy such as electricity produced by solar electric (photovoltaic) systems, wind, or biomass (converting waste to electricity) are examples of “green” energy, and there are more.

**“Green” building includes “green” demolition.** The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates 125 million tons of construction-related renovation and demolition waste is generated in the U. S. each year. “Green” demolition or deconstruction is a way to save money, save resources, and reduce waste by reusing or recycling construction waste, rather than sending it to landfills.

<sup>1</sup> **DISCLAIMER** - This piece is intended to give the reader only general factual information current at the time of publication. This piece is not a substitute for professional advice and should not be used for guidance or decisions related to a specific design or construction project. At a minimum, you should refer to any updated laws, rules, codes, and regulations for requirements applicable to your specific project. This piece is not intended to reflect the opinion of any of the entities, agencies, or organizations identified in the materials and, if any opinions appear, are those of the individual author and should not be relied upon in any event.

**Where can I find information on making a structure a “green” one?** There are more than 70 local and regional “green” building programs in the United States that provide consumer information. Some programs apply to residential, commercial, or both – it is important to check first. Popular programs include (but are not limited to):

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, formed under the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) in 2000, is the only national home rating system that clearly defines and establishes benchmarks for green home features. LEED includes 9,000 members and a network of 75 regional chapters. The program allows builders to obtain a green LEED rating. LEED includes programs for new and existing commercial and residential buildings and is better than some other options for large projects. LEED only recognizes timber certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Green Globes was created in 1996 by the Green Building Initiative (GBI) in Canada and is now in the United States. GBI, considered better for smaller projects, is available for new and existing commercial and residential construction and encourages designers to consider elements of green design and sustainability early in a project and creates interaction between designers, builders, and clients. GBI strongly suggests Life Cycle Assessment (GBI’s program) and Energy Star for all resource and material selection and provides an online system to help with assessment. Green Globes recognizes timber certified from four different certified forests: American Tree Farm System, Canadian Standards Association, Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and the Forest Stewardship Council.

The Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) was created in 2000 by a Florida non-profit and has over 600 members. It provides guidelines for designation and a number of programs for Floridians interested in building or retrofitting a “green” home: the Green Building program, Green Development program, and Green Local Government programs. FGBC’s Green Building program incorporates hurricane protection as a sustainability element in addition to energy and environmental elements. Programs are available for small and large projects. All of these programs use points-based systems to achieve certification ratings provided by independent certifying agents contracted by builders. FGBC allows for the greatest statewide input and includes an annual review process for program modifications. Florida Home Builders Association recommends the FGBC.

The National Green Building Program, created and sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and the NAHB Research Center, offers resources and tools for builders, remodelers, and homeowners. It links dozens of state and local voluntary green building programs with a national online scoring tool for builders and verifiers. The National Green Building Standard is under development by a committee of industry stakeholders and expected to be approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). For an update, please visit <http://www.nahbrc.org/technical/standards/greenbuilding.aspx>.

## Labeling Programs

Energy Star™ is a voluntary labeling program administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It labels products that are energy efficient. Labels are applied to products and homes to identify their achievement of specific levels of energy efficiency established by the EPA. Most people are familiar with the Energy Star labeling for consumer products such as light bulbs, dryers, washers, and refrigerators.

WaterSense™, sponsored by EPA, labels water-efficient products. It partners with manufacturers, retailers, and utilities to encourage innovation and availability of water-efficient toilets, faucets, shower heads, and irrigation services and technologies. EPA is finalizing its WaterSense™ labeling specification for new homes, with implementation to begin as early as 2009.

Green Seal™ works with manufacturers, buyers, and governments and uses a life-cycle approach to evaluating a variety of products (carpet, paint, cleaners, packaging, and much more). Green Seal™ has a number of programs, including standards and certification and reports.

**CAUTION:** Steps should be taken to know the meaning and worth of fees charged for services such as certification versus inspection. Please be sure to request information on the use and applicability of such services.

**NOTE:** The 2008 Florida Legislature passed House Bill 7135, chapter 2008-227, Laws of Florida, relating to energy, that, among other things:

-- Transfers powers and duties to a newly created Florida Energy and Climate Commission in the Executive Office of the Governor

-- Requires the Florida Department of Management Services to develop the Florida Climate-Friendly Preferred Products List

New information, including websites and other contacts, should be made available through [www.flclimatechange.us](http://www.flclimatechange.us)

## Resources - Government Agencies/Offices:

**Energy Star™**, 1-888-782-7937  
<http://www.energystar.gov/>

**Federal Trade Commission**, Environmental Marketing Claims, 1-877-382-4357  
<http://www.ftc.gov/os/fedreg/2008/march/080303enviromentalmarketingclaims.pdf>

**Florida Department of Community Affairs**, Florida Building Commission, 1-850-487-1824  
[www.floridabuilding.org](http://www.floridabuilding.org)  
<http://www.myfloridagreenbuilding.info/index.htm>

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection**  
1-850-245-2118  
[www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2007/12/1226\\_02.htm](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2007/12/1226_02.htm)

**Florida Governor’s Energy and Climate Team**  
1-850-488-4441, [www.flclimatechange.us](http://www.flclimatechange.us)

**U.S. Department of Energy**, Building America, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Solar Decathlon  
1-877-337-3463

[http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/renewable\\_energy/renewable\\_purchasepower.html](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/renewable_energy/renewable_purchasepower.html)  
[www.solardecathlon.org](http://www.solardecathlon.org)

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**, Energy Mortgage Program, 1-202-708-1112

[www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/eem/energy-r.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/eem/energy-r.cfm)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**, WaterSense™  
1-866-987-7367

<http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/index.htm>

## Resources - Other:

**Building Green LLC Publishing**, product guides and reviews, 1-802-257-7300,

<http://www.buildinggreen.com>

**Deconstruction Institute**, 1-941-358-7730

<http://www.deconstructioninstitute.com/>

**Florida Green Building Coalition**, 1-850-894-3422

<http://www.floridagreenbuilding.org/db/>

**Green Building Initiative**, Green Globes

1-877-424-4241 [www.greenglobes.com](http://www.greenglobes.com)

[www.thegbi.org/greenglobes/](http://www.thegbi.org/greenglobes/)

**Green Building Supply**, natural non-toxic building materials, 1-800-405-0222

<http://www.greenbuildingsupply.com/utility/showArticle/?objectID=204>

**Green Seal™**, 1-202-872-6400, [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org)

**International Code Council (ICC)**, International Energy Conservation Council, 1-888-422-7233

[www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org)

**National Association of Home Builders**, National Green Building Program, 1-877-624-2476

<http://www.nahbgreen.org/>

**Natural Resources Defense Council**, Building Green Principles, 1-212-727-2700

[www.nrdc.org/buildinggreen/](http://www.nrdc.org/buildinggreen/)

**Northwest Science and Technology**

*Issue Winter 2006: Going Green: New Approach to Sustainable Building*, 1-206-616-4826

[www.depts.washington.edu/nwst/issues/index.php?issueID=winter\\_2006&storyID=785](http://www.depts.washington.edu/nwst/issues/index.php?issueID=winter_2006&storyID=785)

**TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc.**, *The "Six Sins of Greenwashing"™* (November 2007)

<http://www.terrachoice.com/Home/Greenwashing/The%20Six%20Sins>

**United States Green Building Council**  
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

(LEED), 1-800-795-1747, [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

[www.greenhomeguide.org/index.html](http://www.greenhomeguide.org/index.html)

**University of Florida**, Living Green, 1-352-846-0568

<http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS)

Extension: *EDIS Evaluating Green Communities*

1-352-392-1971, [www.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/)

Powell Center for Construction and Environment

1-352-273-1172, <http://www.cce.ufl.edu/>

**Wood Promotion Network**, Coalition for Wood Products and Promotion, 1-604-891-1222

[www.beconstructive.com](http://www.beconstructive.com)

**Don't know where to go for an answer to a specific question?**

Contact: Building A Safer Florida, Inc. 1-850-222-2772  
or [www.buildingasafeflorida.org](http://www.buildingasafeflorida.org)

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