

10 Tips for Homeowners Who Want to Remodel Green

What a homeowner can do to make sure that their contractor incorporates Green remodeling into their project.

- 1) Start at the very beginning by looking at the site and determining how best to make use of natural features, and how to minimize the impact on surrounding features or properties. Ask if the size of the project is appropriate for the house and property as well as the community? How much house do you need to add to achieve your goals. Can those goals be met in less obvious ways that allow you to work within the footprint of the home?
- 2) Require the use of certain materials on our projects, and don't allow the use of others. A short list of materials to consider using would be: Dual flush low-flow toilets, Icynene insulation, FSC certified millwork, remnant granite, shade tree flooring, flooring and sheet material (for cabinets) made from bamboo, lyptus, mesquite, and wheatboard, 3form Ecoresin (in lieu of plexiglas), triple-glaze wood and aluminum clad wood windows, low or no VOC paints, formaldehyde-free products.

A short list of products to consider avoiding: Any PVC product (vinyl windows, vinyl siding), aluminum siding, aluminum windows, fiberglass insulation, Corian or other petroleum-based countertop material, Built-rite or other formaldehyde-rich sheathing material, tropical hardwoods that are not FSC certified.

- 3) Sort all of the waste material to pull out clean lumber and cardboard that can be recycled for separate pickup. When possible use a dumpster or disposal company that will sort each load for all recyclable materials, like Dumpster in a Bag.
- 4) Design for an open and flexible floor plan that limits the number of doors and full height walls. This decreases our lumber consumption significantly, and helps our HVAC systems run more efficiently.
- 5) Do your best to hire a contractor who has an office that is close. This will help to limit the fuel consumption of the contractor and their crews.
- 6) Don't let low-grade materials enter the project. Think of your project as an investment in not just single home, but a home within a community. Even if you are only going to be there for a few years, the house will remain, and the things you put in it or the changes you make to it, should last as long as the house. The wasted energy, material, and money spent each year on replacing someone's cheap fix is astounding.
- 7) Replace mercury thermostats with non-mercury programmable thermostats.
- 8) When your roof is ready to be replaced, don't buy another asphalt roof! Ask your remodelor to install a metal roof. Available in many styles and colors, these are not the tin roofs of the past. Most metal roofs are either steel or aluminum and are coated with a cool-max paint which receives an Energy Star rating. They weigh 2/3 less than asphalt, carry a 50-year warranty, and can be recycled if damaged or expired. Most importantly they don't retain heat, which means that on those hot summer nights your AC will not have to work as hard to keep your home cool. NOTE: Do not use stone coated metal shingles.

Green building and remodeling for urban living.

- 9) No recessed can lights. These highly inefficient darlings of architects and remodelors who are not comfortable with lighting catalogs, should only be used in very specific circumstances. Don't use them in a ceiling that does not have another living space above it. Don't use them in bathrooms. Avoid using them as general room lights. If you must use them, make sure to use an IC can and then install a spray foam insulation barrier that is sealed to the drywall around them.
- 10) Replace your existing toilets with dual-flush toilets. These ultra-water saving devices allow you to select a large flush or a small flush (for obvious reasons). The typical water savings for the average family is around 6,000 gallons per year! Considering they cost less than \$200, they are an easy way to begin Greening your project.

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