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Jan 12

## [Top 10 Green Building Trends for 2010](#)

- by [JTilley](#) in [Energy Efficiency](#)
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Earth Advantage, a nonprofit organization focused on sustainability programs, has released their picks for the [top green building trends](#) they expect to emerge in 2010.



There are some interesting picks in here, many of which are already emerging as trends. Here are their predictions for 2010 in no particular order:

1. Smart Grid and Connected Home
2. Energy Labeling for Homes
3. Building Information Modeling (BIM) Software
4. Buy-In by Financial Community
5. Rightsizing of Homes (goodbye McMansions!)
6. Eco-Districts (think walkable communities with stores)
7. Water Conservation
8. Life cycle Carbon Calculation
9. Net Zero Buildings
10. Energy-Efficient/Sustainable Building Education

Let's discuss a few of these picks.

Starting from the top, the **smart grid and connected home** is a potentially powerful change. It focuses on the concept of [net metering](#) which is the idea of taking excess energy produced by alternative sources like solar and wind and selling it back to the utility company. Google has [entered this space](#) which should tell you something about its prospects.

**Energy labeling for homes** is another one which may be primed to take off. Think of these labels as similar to the Energy Star label used on appliances – but for your home. There are many of these out there right now but two national certifications are laking the, um, lead. One is the LEED for Homes certification and the other is the NAHB's Green Building Program. LEED appears to be more stringent and many home builders are flocking to the NAHB's national program or other regional or local certifications. Either way, builders and remodelers are finding value in marketing their homes with third-party certifications.

**Buy-in to green building from the financial community** is an important trend to watch. The more support given by the powerful lobbying groups of the mortgage, insurance and real estate industries the better.

The “**rightsizing**” concept is pretty simple. [Bigger isn't always better](#). 80% of homeowners with formal living rooms never use those spaces. With energy costs on the rise many homeowners are asking themselves if they really need that extra, unused space to heat and cool. As an alternative some are putting the money saved from adding additional square footage into amenities and details that give the home a richer feel.

**Net zero buildings** combine many energy efficiency concepts and practices into one home and it starts with conservation. Too many of our homes lose the heating and cooling we're paying for through leaks (windows, doors, electrical outlets, lack of insulation, etc.). On top of supreme air sealing and insulating, net zero homes add alternative energy production to supply the energy needs. Basically, if you can keep more of the heating and cooling you produce in the home, your production needs are far less. Then, any excess power produced can be sold back to the utility with net metering in place. Take a look at four net zero homes winning awards in the [2010 Builders' Challenge](#).

**Sustainable building education** is an imperative. There's a lot confusion about what it means to build sustainable and energy-efficient homes and once the marketers got hold of the term “green”, they kind of ruined it for those who promote it out of an understanding of the issues and how they affect the homeowner. I suspect most people would want a home that costs less to heat and cool and is healthier for its occupants. And the premium for a high performance home is shrinking constantly. Take a look at our [Best Practices](#) section on insulation, mechanicals and green building. These aren't new techniques, they're just the right way to build.

Posted at 5:58 pm

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theodora · 34 weeks ago

0

I watch a lot of HGTV. I'm happy that they have some programs about green and sustainable building. I wish that they had more examples on some of their programs. I shake my head when people look at overly large homes with good quality materials, and people say, "Well, I don't like these Corian countertops. We'd have to upgrade to granite." How spoiled we have become, and how few people seem to be aware that large homes use more resources, not only to build, but, as you say above, to heat and cool. I think granite counter tops are gorgeous. But how many mountains around the world are we tearing up to make them, and how much energy are we using to ship them all over the world, so people can have their status symbol?

I'd like to see more emphasis on smaller, more efficient homes, and more examples of sustainable building practices.

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Ruth T · 34 weeks ago

0

I hope HGTV does not go the way of the guilt trips on Green TV. When green building makes sense great, but let's not turn it into the new religion. Education is good, guilt trips are not.

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Heidi · 34 weeks ago

0

unfortunately, "guilt tripping" may be the only way to wake up some people to the need to go more green and stop WASTING our resources before it is too late and they are GONE!!!

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scott · 34 weeks ago


0

I, too, am dismayed by the trendsetting programing (a lot of it is on HGTV) that gives the message that anything without

granite countertops and slate lined showers needs "updating." I wonder how formica counter tops rank in the sustainable construction concept. It seems that they last way too long and cost way too little. What do you think?

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 David · 34 weeks ago

0

Ruth, I agree. When they start with the "guilt tripping" I turn them off. I am all for sustainable materials that are as good or better and cost the same or less. But, don't ask me to buy into theories that have no sound scientific backing. It would take a lot more than a home improvement show to convince me that humans occupying less than 1/4 of the world's surface can somehow change globally what God has created.


So educate me on the building process and the benefits to the home owner, not the world at large and I will more than gladly listen and learn.

Go for the guilt trip and I will elect to save some electricity by shutting the TV off. Or change the channel to a hunting show perhaps.

David

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 theodora · 34 weeks ago


0

I can understand how it would seem that humans couldn't be doing all that much damage when they occupy ONLY 1/4 of the earth's surface...(seems like a lot to me).

But you might find it interesting to check out the tons of carbon dioxide that is generated from making the concrete for a driveway...or to build a house in general. It's amazing. It does make the 6000 square foot homes seem a bit unnecessary.

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 Suzanne · 34 weeks ago


0

It would seem to me that using natural stone for floors, walls, counter tops and patios/decks would just make sense from an eco-friendly point of view instead of using plastics or other manufactured products that emit gases and pollutants as well as shorter life spans. The beauty and durability of natural stone is not only not a "fad" or "trend" but a return to reality from a plastic throw away concept of planned obsolescence in favor of sustainability. How many of the homes we are building now will be present and livable two hundred years from now? And stand as examples of how we took care of ourselves and our world?

It's not about guilt tripping. It's about opportunities for something better and worthwhile at the same time.

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 theodora · 34 weeks ago

0

Yes, if the stone is local. It is interesting that homes in the east seem to be preserved forever. There are so many cute colonial homes in the Northeast, for example, that are 200 or even 300 years old. And yet here in the west, we seem to tear things down when they're less than a century. The amazing thing is that it's much harder to preserve a home in the east because of their more humid climate. So I guess they take it for granted and keep things up. The other thing I noticed when I was visiting my sister there is that their concepts of decor are different. They like handcrafts and antiques, they enjoy the history and background of the things they buy and use, and I didn't see granite counter tops in any of my sister's friend's homes (who are all very well educated and prosperous). They don't seem to think they need them in order to have a beautiful home.

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 mar · 34 weeks ago

0

What is so crazy to me is people looking at houses to buy and they say "Oh these countertops are not made of a green material. We will have to tear them out and replace them with something more environmentally friendly." What is more environmentally friendly than using what you already have?!!

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 theodora · 34 weeks ago

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Agreed! That's pretty silly!

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 Mariann Cole · 34 weeks ago

0

I wish there were more laws limiting homeowners assoc. from denying the use of solar.

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 theodora · 34 weeks ago

0

Wow, I didn't know that was an issue! That's really unfortunate. I wonder if you could have a meeting with the folks in the association, talk about trends and see if there could be a change. Solar isn't THAT unsightly!

Reply

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 Betty · 34 weeks ago

0

Many homeowners associations have also denied requests to replace asphalt shingle roofs with metal roofs which are far more durable and energy efficient - all because metal roofs do not conform with the roofs of other homes in the neighborhoods. Is this crazy or what?

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